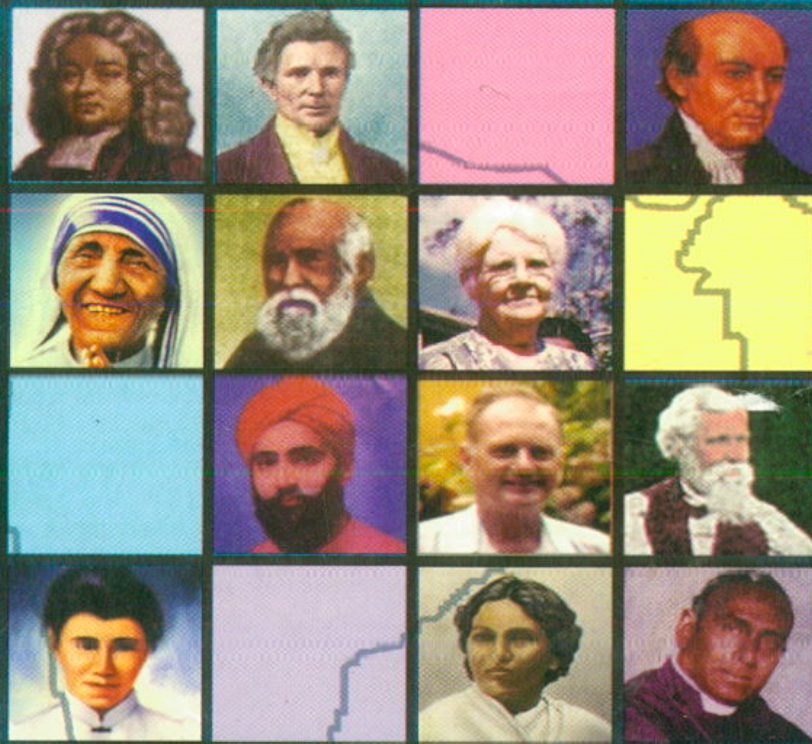


# **Christian Contribution To Nation Building**



**General Editor**  
**Bishop Dr Ezra Sargunam**







**CHRISTIAN  
CONTRIBUTION  
TO  
NATION BUILDING**







# **CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION TO NATION BUILDING**

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*Surjit Singh Barnala*

GOVERNOR



December 29, 2005

## MESSAGE

I am pleased to note that the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of Evangelical Church of India is to be held on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2006 at Chennai and a Compendium is being brought in commemoration.

India is a fabric interwoven with religions, different languages and cultures with rich heritage. Christianity taught men love, unity and universal brotherhood.

The contributions made by Christians for the growth of the Society and nation especially in the field of Education & Health are commendable. Their service to the downtrodden, poor and needy, the love, compassion, self-respect and respect for humanity has built the bondage of unity.

I convey my warm felicitations to all my Christian brethren and wish the Golden Jubilee Celebrations all success.

*Surjit Singh Barnala*

(SURJIT SINGH BARNALA)





**M. KARUNANIDHI**

President, D.M.K.



## **MESSAGE**

I am happy to know through Rev. Bishop Dr. M.Ezra Sargunam that the planning committee of “Every Tongue and Tribe Festival- an All-India Ecumenical Conference on Nation Building” and the ECI Golden Jubilee Committee are bringing out a compendium on Christian contribution to Nation Building. The Christian missionaries who had landed in India long time back had worked for the upliftment of the local community with zeal and zest. They concentrated on the basic spheres of Education and Health.

Thiru R. L. Rawat in his “History of Indian Education” says that India will ever be indebted to the Missionaries for the production of text-books, dictionaries and grammar and their enthusiasm in the progress of education.

Pandit Nehru in his “Discovery of India” had acknowledged the contribution of the early missionaries and observed: “The desire of the Christian missionaries to translate the Bible into every possible language resulted in the development of many Indian Languages. The work of the Christian missionaries has always been admirable or praiseworthy”

Constanzio Beschi (1680-1747), Robert Caldwell (1815-1891), G.U.Pope (1820-1900) Vedanayagam Pillai and H.A. Krishna Pillai have made a very significant contribution to the development of Tamil Literature.

There is a good number of such examples and instances. The contribution made by the Christians to the Indian Nation building is quite meaningful and magnificent.

I earnestly wish that the efforts being taken to bring out a compendium yield useful results.

  
(M. KARUNANIDHI)





## FOREWORD



**T**he Church knows that value of human life as a creation of God and as an object of Christ's liberation, and it has fervently continued to work for and promote the divinely given principles of social morality, assure public justice and human welfare. The Church in India though a minority community has sacrificially contributed to building of our motherland India. The mission of the Church is to be light and salt, that is it has preserving and illuminating significance. The Church is duty bound to promote social justice. Only private and public righteousness can exalt a nation.

The Church through its various NGO has consistently served the poor. Jesus launched his public ministry with Isaiah's prophecy of good news to the poor, with a message of hope in their total predicament. Jesus unobtrusively gave to the poor. Distribution to those in need is viewed in the Bible as evidence of love for God. Sensitive Christian conscience has supported programs responding to needs of the aged, the blind, lame and dying, supplying food for the starving, job training for adults, and non-discriminatory educational opportunities.

The family is the basic natural order of creation and a microcosm of humankind. Parents find a new life together in union; children are divinely given as a sacred trust. The modern society increasingly views sex solely in terms of biological gratification and in a context of license, and irresponsibility. All of us need to strengthen the institution of family in order to strengthen our nation.

The Church must continue to work for the liberation of the poor the Dalits and the marginalized of the society. The teaching of the Bible of the priesthood of all believers strikes a deathblow at religious superiority of the few. No man or woman needs to accept as normative oppressive, wicked and exploitative forces of iniquity. All of us need to exemplify love and justice.

With best wishes,  
**Rev Richard Howell**



## PREFACE



We feel that today there is an urgent need for producing an extensive and comprehensive written record of Christian Contribution to Nation Building. We understand that there are some written evidences on this subject, but they are not comprehensive enough in dealing with all that the Christians have done for the welfare of our motherland. The books that are available are mostly based on denomination or dealing with some particular aspect of Christian concern. As a consequence, the Indians in general and Indian Church in particular have no knowledge of the Christian contribution to the building up of our homeland.

Indian Christians can boldly say that the growth and development of our nation today, has been due to the work of early missionaries and the native Christian leaders. They served the country in order to uplift the poor and the oppressed. They lead them on to better paths and enabled them to develop their living conditions as well as ushered transformation of their social and spiritual life. Furthermore, their contribution in the sphere of modern education, scientific developments, culture and religious faith were praise worthy. They were always ready to serve sacrificially and to render their service to those who were victimized. These pioneers were deeply rooted in the fertile soil our Motherland.

We can proudly say that Christians have served the country for over 2,000 years and contributed to the socio-economic, historic, cultural, political, spiritual, educational, philanthropic and developmental causes. The parliamentary democracy, judiciary and



well maintained bureaucracy and the civilized government was certainly the outcome of our Christian forefathers. In fact the modern Indian State was distinctively a missionary / Christian contribution.

This volume is aimed to bring out a comprehensive survey of the brilliant contributions of selfless Christian service in the various fields such as education, healthcare, vernacular literacy, literature, local economics, politics and indigenous religious faiths, etc. I believe that the work will be a comprehensive, detailed, explicit, and all-inclusive presentation of our invaluable Christian heritage.

I want to thank all the contributors who have taken time to write their papers and send them to us on time. I am particularly thankful to Dr Samuel Jayakumar, Principal - Madras Theological Seminary & College, who has worked very hard to gather the essays from the writers. Also, thanks are due to Dr S. D. Ponraj, General Secretary - Mission Educational Books, for coming forward to publish this significantly important volume.



**Bishop Dr M. EZRA SARGUNAM**  
General Editor



## Chapter - I

# THE FOUNDATION LAID BY CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES TOWARDS NATION BUILDING

If a survey were to be taken today, 2006 in India across the religious and social spectrum concerning the contribution and impact of Christianity, a popular comment would very likely be, with some very genuine appreciation, upon the Church's establishment of high-quality, value-based schools and hospitals. Obviously, the Christian community's impact does not end there. Accompanying the schools came the printing presses. These were helpful in the dissemination of literature of all kinds. In fact, the early overseas missionaries were responsible for pioneering English and modern vernacular education. Of this, R.L. Rawat, *History of Indian Education*, pays tribute to the missionary contribution when he says, India will ever be indebted to them for the production of text books, dictionaries, and grammars and their zeal in the progress of education.<sup>1</sup>



**Dr Graham Houghton** Principal  
Emeritus - SAIACS, Bangalore.

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The "good works" carried out by missionaries and Christians have always been understood to be an expression of their love and obedience to the Lord Jesus. The underlying motivation, of course, was their obligation to proclaim the salvation of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Indians have, by and large, been willing to receive the former, but many have rejected the need for the latter as the upper castes in particular, would say, "We have our own saviours."

Still the Christian community has felt that they have contributed to the building of the nation. This because any encounter with Jesus, for those who have decided to follow Him, has precipitated a personal and social transformation. The outcomes have been an effective cause of upward social mobility which has changed lives, benefited families, neighbourhoods, villages, and entire ethnic communities. It needs to be added that this is particularly the case among the poor and the disenfranchised, namely, those who today are classified as backward classes and *Dalits* i.e., the oppressed.

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century it was the Jesuits who first established institutions of learning. These were followed by the German Tranquebar missionaries. Later the renowned Christian Friedrich Schwartz, started schools both in vernacular languages and in English.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, it was William Carey and the British Baptists who, arriving in Calcutta in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, pioneered modern education in north India. By 1818, there were 111 schools located as far away from Calcutta as Shimla and Delhi in the north, and Rajputna in the south.

With the renewal of the Charter in 1813 and the arrival of a host of British Mission Societies, there was a proliferation of schools and printing presses all over the country. The first Western type post secondary school, Serampore College, was organized in 1818. The

American Mission opened schools for boys in Bombay from 1815 and in 1829. John Wilson saw to it that a school was also set up in Bombay for girls.<sup>3</sup>

The arrival in Calcutta of the Scotsmen, Alexander Duff, in 1830, marked the beginning of a whole new approach to learning, namely, English language education. Duff was captivated with "the glowing prospects of Christianity in [India]," and with what he referred to as the "ultimate evangelization of India." On the other hand, Duff pondered over the question of what was to be the future language of learning in India and which would prove to be the "most effective instrument of large, liberal, and enlightened education?"<sup>4</sup>

Not surprisingly, Duff's idea to set up an English language school was, at first, rather controversial. Quite a measure of opposition was stirred up but soon the objections were set aside and Duff's modest experiment began to catch the imagination of the upper classes and those who possessed aspirations for their children. Duff was rewarded for his courage. His work was a great success and resulted in the expansion of English language education schools and institutions throughout British India in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries at primary, secondary, and university levels, so that in the course of time English became the veritable lingua franca of India; so much so, that subsequent to Independence English was declared to be an official language. The widespread and popular adoption of English by people of all language groups and classes has certainly placed India advantageously with respect to claiming a rightful place in the affairs of the present globalization of diplomacy, politics, economics, and technology.

Christians were also pioneers in the field of **female education**. Much of this work was taken up by the wives of early missionaries, and by single women missionaries of whom there were many. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the



commonly accepted view in India was that formal education was not for women of any kind, much less for those from respectable families. So much was this the prevailing mood that, by 1834, it is reported that only one percent of Indian women could read and write.<sup>5</sup>

Yet by 1900, an impressive number of schools and colleges had been opened in major cities, towns, and even villages throughout India for both men and women. Christians also went to live and work among both the tribals and the *dalits*. The former were animists and lived outside the Hindu fold, while the latter were those who were born outcaste and, therefore, excluded from the orthodox Hindu social structure.

Toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Christian missionaries began to take more seriously the needs of the tribals and dalits and went to them with the message of Jesus. They began schools and reduced the languages of many to written form. The upshot was that these people responded to the appeal of Jesus Christ in great numbers. This was particularly so in the North East and in the mass movement of Andhra Pradesh and south Tamil Nadu. The outcomes were that cultures were socially and morally transformed. Their men and women became aware, for the first time, of their own value and self-worth; and they were proud of who they were and it gave them a profound sense of dignity.

In 1997 the reputed and secular weekly, *India Today*, published a report identifying the top ten colleges in the nation.<sup>6</sup> Five of these were Christian, namely, St Stephen's, New Delhi; St Xavier's, Bombay and Calcutta; Loyola College, Madras; and Stella Maris College, (Women) Madras. Then there are others equally prestigious; Madras Christian College; Isabella Thorburn College, (Women), Lucknow; Sarah Tucker College, Palayamkottai; and Mount Carmel Women's College, Bangalore. Certainly one way to measure the impact of

Christianity in India is to observe the masses of people of all religious communities and social classes who literally scramble and use whatever influence they have at their disposal to get their children admitted into Christian schools. The rush begins at lower kindergarten and proceeds right through to university colleges. This, even when parents whether Hindu, Muslim or Sikh, must sign an understanding and or be willing to have their children study the Bible as an integral part of the curriculum.

Christians have also made a sterling contribution in India in the fields of languages, literature, and journalism. Constanzio Beschi (1680 -1747) reformed Tamil alphabetical characters and made them more suitable for the printing press. He also produced a fourfold Tamil dictionary which was divided according to words, synonyms, classes, and rhymes. Bishop Robert Caldwell (1815-1891) who wrote *Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Languages* and G.U. Pope (1820 -1908) who translated certain classics of Tamil literature into English are men worthy of note. Vedanayagam Pillai (1824-1889) and H.A. Krishna Pillai (1827-1900) are two other Christian writers who together produced some of the first Tamil novels.

The French priest, Francis Mary of Toure, began work on Hindustani as early as 1680 and composed a massive dictionary entitled *Thesaurus Linguae Indianae*. Modern Hindi, the national language, developed out of Hindustani. Henry Martyn and a certain Dr Gilchrist, a professor of Hindustani and an American Presbyterian missionary, and the Rev. S.H. Kellogg all contributed to the formation and popularization of Hindustani. Kellogg, in fact, drew more than a dozen dialects together to assist in creating what is today known as *Hindi*. He produced in 1893 a masterful work, *A Grammar of the Hindi Language*, which is still in circulation.<sup>7</sup>

William Carey and his Baptist colleagues, beginning in 1818, were the first to produce periodicals, journals, and a newspaper. Their publication, *The Friends of India*, lived on and is now an English daily, *The Statesman*, published from Calcutta and New Delhi.

Jawaharlal Nehru in his, *Discovery of India*, acknowledges the contribution of the early missionaries, especially the Baptists of Serampore, in respect to precipitating a shift away from the dominating influence of both Sanskrit and Persian. The printing of books and newspapers by the missionaries, together with English language education, no doubt, broke the hold of the classics, says Nehru, and allowed regional languages to emerge and blossom. While Nehru saw no difficulty in missionaries dealing with the major languages, he notes that they, "even laboured at the dialects of the primitive hill and forest tribes . . . The desire of the Christian missionaries to translate the Bible into every possible language thus resulted in the development of many Indian languages. Christian mission work in India has not always been admirable or praiseworthy," observes Nehru, "but in this respect, as well as in the collection of folklore, it has undoubtedly been of great service to India."<sup>8</sup>

From the very first, missionaries were shocked at the social evils that persisted in India. Where gross ignorance prevailed, both the good and the vicissitudinous occurrences of life were often interpreted as divine blessings or curses. Such views resulted in the practice of *Sati*, widow burning, the killing of lepers, and the sacrifice of children.

William Carey for one, was active from the moment of his arrival in 1793 in any issue that he felt needed change or reform. Within a year, near Malda, he reports having found the remains of an infant that had first been offered to a god as a sacrifice and then abandoned to be



eaten by white ants. Moreover, children were thrown into the Ganges in fulfilment of vows taken for answers to prayer. Most Europeans were greatly distressed by such things, but William Carey determined to do all he could to see such appalling practices outlawed. Carey was a networker and close to those in authority and power. The Governor-General, Lord Wellesley, asked him to submit a report on the matter. Subsequently, Wellesley in 1802 declared infanticide to be an act of murder and that those who performed such horrible deeds, if caught, would themselves be put to death.

Carey employed his publications to educate public opinion on matters of humanitarian concern. The very first issue of, *The Friend of India*, carried an exhaustive report of an actual *Sati*. Subsequently he kept the dreadful practice before the public and did all he could to see *Sati* abolished. By 1814 Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who was greatly influenced by the teachings of Jesus, joined Carey in the campaign against *Sati*. Armed with accounts of 438 widow burnings, Carey and his Serampore colleagues implored the Government to forbid the rite by law. At first, very little impression was made, due to strong opposition from high caste Hindu socio-political leaders. The Christians kept up the pressure and eventually the public conscience turned against the orthodox Hindus. In 1829 Lord William Bentinck finally signed an Order prohibiting the wicked rite in the occupancies of the East India Company.<sup>9</sup>

The field of medicine is another area in which Christians have made a significant contribution to the welfare and the common good of India. It was the Jesuits who first introduced western type medicine in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. For the most, part they opened infirmaries attached to their living accommodations. Dr John Thomas, an associate of William Carey, began his work in 1799. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, medical works of various

kinds were established throughout India, set up by almost every missionary society. Two have been internationally recognized. The first, the Christian Medical College Hospital, Ludhiana was founded by Dr Edith Brown in 1893. Meanwhile the other, Christian Medical College Hospital, Vellore, grew out of Dr Ida Scudder's roadside clinics, ostensibly for women, first begun in 1895. In the course of time, both of these hospitals added to their facilities and became the first Government recognized Medical Colleges for women and subsequently for men.

Then there have been educational programmes set up for the mentally challenged and the disabled. The Roman Catholics have performed outstanding services to these much neglected men and women. The first institution for the deaf was organized by an Order of nuns in Bombay in 1884. Since then, Catholic and Protestant Christians have established numerous homes throughout India for the abandoned, the abused, and the exploited. Two of the most impressive of these centres are the Mukti Mission in Kedgaon, near Pune, founded by Pandita Ramabai in 1898 especially for orphaned girls and abused women. The other, the Dohnavur Fellowship, was first organized in 1901 by Amy Carmichael in the very south of India. Its object was to rescue girls who had been forced into temple prostitution.

Another matter of concern among Christians over the years has been the abominable practice of child marriage whereby alliances are made among caste Hindus between children as young as five years. Eventually it was legislatively banned in 1929. Carey's solution was to promote female education. Christians since then have made a concerted effort to promote the approval of widow remarriage.

These pioneering efforts also included Sanatoria for tuberculosis patients and for those who had contracted

leprosy. The Schefflin Research and Training Centre in Karigiri, near Vellore, has carried out much original creative work in the area of leprosy reconstruction and rehabilitation.

It must be said that while most of the early expressions of Christianity's compassion were pioneered by foreign missionaries, the wholehearted devotion of Indian Christians to Jesus Christ has meant that they have carried on and even multiplied the legacy handed down to them. This has been so much the case that well into the late 20<sup>th</sup> century a preponderance of doctors and nurses in any area of health care and medicine have been Christians. Moreover, many Hindus and Muslims still prefer to go to Christian hospitals because they value the kindness and professionalism of the staff; and, with respect to their women, they say they feel safe.

Christians were also involved in rural development. Typical have been the Allahabad Agricultural College organized in 1910 and the Bethel Agricultural Fellowship near Salem, Tamil Nadu in the early 1960s. The aims were to assist and improve the productivity of farmers. K.T. Paul had similar concerns and came up with the idea of what he called "rural reconstruction."

Meanwhile, the Basel Mission which began its work from its headquarters in Mangalore is well-known for introducing into India the manufacture of cheap terracotta tiles and other related products; all to improve village house construction. Such tiles are still popularly known, no matter who produces them, as mission tiles.

Disaster relief is another area in which the Christian community has made an impressive impact. Over the years, the Churches Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA); the Evangelical Fellowship of India Commission on Relief (EFICOR); Catholic World Relief (CWR); World Vision and others have all been in the forefront of Non-Government Organizations willing to assist in providing immediate



and longterm reconstruction to people and places wherever the tragedy of disaster has struck.

Indian Christians did not participate as much as might have been expected in the national movement for freedom. On the other hand, Kanakarayan Paul was one who deeply regretted the isolation of the Indian Christian community from the political events surrounding them. Bishop Paul Appaswamy added that if the Indian Church was to exert any influence upon the life of India it should take a "definite part in the social and public activities of the country." Meanwhile, *The Christian Patriot*, the Church's leading Indian weekly newspaper, conceded that, with a few noble exceptions Indian Christians, kept away from the nationalist movement. It then urged Christians to recognize they had a duty toward India and then declared that "A real Christian cannot help being, at the same time, a true Indian patriot."<sup>10</sup>

V. Chakkarai, a lawyer and a convert, was not surprised that the uneducated masses of Christians took practically no interest in political affairs. What troubled him was that the educated demonstrated so little concern when he felt they ought to be shining examples of patriotism and lead the way in all movements of national welfare. Bishop Henry Whitehead of Madras explains the very likely reasons for the general Christian apathy toward the freedom movement. He challenged the validity of the Christian Church becoming caught up in what he referred to as a "whirlpool of political unrest." Moreover, he felt political agitation was contrary to the spirit of Christ. Even Chakkarai recognized that the Christian community, like all other minorities was, "intensely afraid of being swamped by the Hindu majority." Dr Joseph Ghose writing in 1917 was even more forthright: "We have learned by experience," he said, "that what is called the national cause is really the Hindu cause and that Home Rule is merely Hindu Rule."<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, there were a number of Christians involved in the freedom movement. Those included K.T. Paul, V. Chakkarai and his colleagues, Bishop Paul Appaswamy, Bishop Waskom Pickett, E. Stanley Jones and, to a lesser extent, Bishop V. S. Azariah. In addition, several Christians played an important role in framing the Indian Constitution. There were six appointed to the Minority Advisory Committee by the Constituent Assembly. They were Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur, Elbar D'Souza, P. K. Salvry, H.C.Mukherji, J.J. M. Nichols Roy and J.N.P. Roch Victoria. The Committee met under the leadership of Sardar Vallabhai Patel in late 1947. To the surprise of many, the Christian representatives expressed their commitment to the Christian ideal of oneness and their eagerness to participate in the building of the nation. Therefore, they went to the extent of turning down the need for any political safeguards which would protect any parochial interests they might otherwise have had. Not only so, they went even further and gave up any claim they may have pleaded for, with respect to seat reservations in the new Parliament. To their credit and on behalf of a majority of the Christian community, they reckoned that the reservation of seats was not necessary and in the interests of national integration, Christians merged with the constituency at large and became part of the general electorate.

As a result, Christians were perhaps a little less flexible when it came to those sections that dealt with religious prerogatives. Their concerns were threefold, namely, the right to practice and propagate one's faith; the freedom to offer religious instruction in aided schools; lastly, and importantly for Christians, the right of conversion from one religion to another. Obviously all of this generated considerable discussion and debate. Ultimately, the Constituent Assembly approved these provisions, which became law on the 26 January 1950.<sup>12</sup>

The Christian representatives were convinced that these were constitutional rights essential to Christian freedoms and central to the strengthening of India's secular democracy and the Christian contribution to it.

At the centre of India's struggle for freedom from the British was the towering figure of Mahatma Gandhi. He was well acquainted with Christianity. However, it was Jesus Christ more than Christians that touched his heart. In 1920, he wrote "I revere the Bible. Christ's Sermon on the Mount fills me with bliss even today. It's sweet verses have even today the power to quench my agony of the soul..."<sup>13</sup> Obviously, then the life and teaching of Jesus influenced Gandhi profoundly. Writing in *The Harijan* in January 1939, he said, "Though I cannot claim to be a Christian in the sectarian sense, the example of Jesus' suffering is a factor in the composition of my undying faith in non-violence which rules all my actions, worldly and temporal."<sup>14</sup>

Understandably, Gandhi had a host of friends. Among those who were Christians and the most cherished were Charlie Andrews and the Principal of St Stephen's College, Sushil Kumar Rudra. In earlier times, Gandhi writes of his being a guest in Rudra's home whenever he visited Delhi. When writing a condolence letter upon his death in 1925 Gandhi says, "[Rudra] and Charlie Andrews were my revisionists. Non-cooperation was conceived and hatched under his hospitable roof."<sup>15</sup> Is it any wonder, then, that the words of Jesus that spoke most clearly to Gandhi concerning non-violence and peaceful resistance are taken from the Sermon on the Mount, namely, "Blessed are the peace makers, for they will be called sons of God,"<sup>16</sup> and "Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."<sup>17</sup> Gandhi is reported to have described Jesus as the most active resistor in history. He was, Gandhi says, "non-violence par excellence."<sup>18</sup>



The impact of Christianity on Mahatma Gandhi's thinking and behaviour cannot be fully measured. However, in his well-documented study, A.J. Anandan concludes that from Gandhi's close association with a number of Christians and his considerable knowledge of the Bible, that many of his ideas and ideals were borrowed from Jesus. For example, the suffering of Jesus on the cross was a model for Gandhi's resistance and non-violence approach in dealing with the British Raj. Ultimately says, Anandan, Gandhi employed Christian weapons against the colonial rule of the British to attain political independence for India eventually.

The 1991 Census of India indicates that the Christians make up 2.3 % of the total population. That is some 23 million people. However, informed Christian executives and demographers would put the number of Christians at five percent or 50 million. Whichever way it is looked at, the number of Christians in India is growing. This is supported by the fact that there are more than 600 Churches in Delhi, with services being conducted in almost any major language. In Bangalore, a city of six million, there are 970 Churches alongwith at least twelve accredited Theological Institutions with three or four offering Ph.D. level training. Then in Chennai (Madras) ten percent of the population is Christian which worships in above 2,000 Churches. Some of these congregations are small; that is sixty to one hundred people, and some are house churches. However, there are many congregations whose attendance is above 1,000 or even 5,000 in all of the three cities noted. At the same time, there are two Churches in Chennai whose average attendance on Sundays as of 2004 is 23,000 and 15,000 respectively. The former is New Life Assembly of God and the latter is the Apostolic Christian Assembly. Obviously these are rather high profile, and equally so, they are addressing the felt needs

of people. In other words, Christianity is making an impact on urban populations as well as in the more rural and tribal areas.

The idea of conversion from one faith to another does not sit well with the Hindu mindset. If there is anything that would be upsetting to Hindus in their relationship with Christians it would be the Christian claim concerning the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and that Jesus is the one and only Saviour. These two doctrinal truths are central to Christian orthodoxy. And Christians cannot truly be Christians if they do not engage in the proclamation of Jesus Christ. This, of course, can take many forms; social, educational, works of compassion, disaster rehabilitation and in the offering of forgiveness and peace of mind to those who become the followers of Jesus Christ. At the same time, Christians have not been mandated to be rude, intrusive, or overtly aggressive.

Nita Kumar, writing in September 1993 in *The Economic Times*, Bangalore, took a rather different perspective when expressing her concern that India had not until then been able to forge successfully a path to modernity. Whereas the missionaries organized their institutions, she says, in such a way that they did succeed, others had failed in modernising those who studied in them. The central contribution of Christian missionaries then, she asserts, has not been so much conversion to Christianity as it has been conversion to modernity. This she describes as a no-nonsense rationalistic and humanistic approach to life. Those who are thus converted are what Nita Kumar refers to as "true 'modern' Indians." Moreover, she reckons it is they who are "the builders of the new India."<sup>19</sup>

The fact that the Christian community has contributed positively to nation building is uncontested. Today there are Christians integrated into the very fabric of all areas of India society; both in the public and private

sectors - this from Members of Parliament, Chief Ministers, captains of business corporations, physicians, engineers, and on down to chauffeurs and the man at the gate. In conclusion, a paraphrase from the late Bishop Stephen Neill of the Tirunelveli Diocese, Church of South India:<sup>20</sup> For the Christian Church and its mission in India, the task has been challenging. It is quite remarkable that it was even attempted. It is not at all surprising that along the journey a number of mistakes have been made. It is equally surprising that in the name of Jesus Christ such a considerable measure of success has been accomplished.

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## **Chapter - II**

# **CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION TO ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY IN INDIA**

### **Temptation**

It would be tempting to compile a list of all the "good work" done by Christians in India over centuries of Christian witness since the time of St Thomas – institutions built to benefit the poor through education and provision of healthcare; programmes to distribute resources and legislation to end exploitation. It would be an impressive and valuable list to compile. After all, if the Good News of Jesus Christ is Good News to the Poor, it must be such that the poor actually welcome it as Good News for them. In the Parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus says, "Go and do likewise," emphasizing the importance of practical help. However, such a list on its own would make Christians vulnerable to being misunderstood and even exploited.

In the West, currently it is normal for every public campaign for "justice" and every fund raising activity



**Canon Dr Chris Sugden,**  
Executive Secretary -  
Anglican Mainstream International  
India 1977-83  
Oxford 1983-date.

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to assist the poor, to seek to secure the participation of Churches and Christians. This is understandable. The Christian Scriptures speak of a God who loves justice and commands people to remember the poor. However, if we were to calculate the Christian contribution through adding up all this activity we would miss the central point. For what is happening is that the churches are being asked to join programmes and support processes that are developed by others, and often deliberately exclude any religious element.

### **Centrality of Religion**

It is the religious point that is central. M.M. Thomas wrote thirty years ago of the central contribution of the Christian churches to alleviating poverty – it was that their belief, their message, their community and their action witnessed to a new way of being human that gave dignity and identity to people from whom it had been removed, often for generations.

#### **This is what he wrote:**

“The outcastes, the poor, and the orphans saw Christian faith as the source of a new humanising influence and the foundation of a human community. Where conversion was genuine, whether of individuals or of groups, the converts saw salvation in Christ not only in terms of individual salvation, of heaven after death, but as also a spiritual source of a new community on earth in which their human dignity and status were recognised. It was the promise of humanisation inherent in the gospel of salvation which led to the influx of the oppressed into the church.” M.M. Thomas. *Salvation and Humanisation* (Madras : Christian Literature Society, 1971) p 14.

“Considering the fact that the Christian Missions were the first in many parts of India to treat the untouchables as human beings, and to bring them the gospel of their dignity in Christ as well as education, Christianity has played a part in arousing and



strengthening anti-Brahmanism. Further, the climate created by Anti-Brahmanism about the necessity of the depressed classes to leave the Hindu fold, for the sake of their human dignity, paved the path of Christian evangelism and the mass movement of conversion among them. And this in turn awoke the Brahmin and other caste Hindu leadership to the need of putting the Hindu household itself in order by social and religious reform ... fear of Christianity has been the beginning of social wisdom for Hinduism." MM Thomas. *The Secular Ideologies of India and the Secular Meaning of the Gospel* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1976), p. 152.

### **The Gospel and Identity**

What the Gospel of Jesus Christ does for people from whom their sense of identity, humanity, and dignity has been forcibly removed by others, is to tell them that that beyond and apart from the processes of this world, God has taken action to give all men and women identity as sons and daughters of God. This is not earned by merit or conferred by birth, inheritances, or status but received by grace through faith in Jesus.

John the evangelist wrote: "To all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John 1.12.

The death of Christ has dealt with every force that people might believe separates them from God: evil powers, fate, and personal wrongdoing. Through accepting his death as ours under sin, we enter into the place of resurrection, forgiveness, and new life by grace as sons and daughters in the family of God. Those who receive this free gift, in spite of their demerits, stand in a new place of identity with a hope that God's purpose for the world will be fulfilled through Jesus and the powers of death will not prevail against it.

Further, the resurrection of Jesus has reversed a great injustice of the world, namely that death overcomes all, no matter how they have lived. How can it be that the God who created people and gave life allows his purpose to be overwhelmed by the forces of death in the life of an AIDS orphan or the victim of the Tsunami? This is a great injustice and it has been reversed by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

### **The Churches' Contribution**

This is what is central to the churches' contribution to the alleviation of poverty. The church is a community called by God to witness to the resurrection of Jesus, to proclaim His forgiveness, to issue the invitation to become sons and daughters of God through grace, and to look forward to the fulfilment of God's purposes for the world in the Kingdom of God when Jesus returns.

This is the Church's commission. If you have received this commission you are part of the Church. If the Church does not carry out this commission no one else will or can. The churches' contribution in working with the poor is well recognized by Robert Calderisi of the World Bank who wrote of the Church in Africa:

"You are close to the poor. You are rooted in local communities. You are normally truthful and neutral, and detached from partisan politics. And you are able to serve the material – not just the spiritual – needs of the poor directly. You can challenge governments and international institutions about their policies and actions and provide first-hand information on the needs and views of local communities." *Robert Calderisi: The World Bank and Africa in Faith in Development*, edited by Belshaw, Calderisi and Sugden (Regnum/World Bank 2001) p. 64.

However, the Church is able to do this, not because of moralism, or humanitarianism, but because of its beliefs and commitments. And these need to be honestly recognized and allowed to be expressed. If they are not, the poor will be the losers.

## **Chapter - III**

# **CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION TO NATIONAL DEFENCE**

### **Introduction**

Indian Christians have, since 1947, made a very impressive and significant contribution to National Defence, be it on land, at sea, or in the air. Without secure frontiers, where would India be? And this contribution is reflected in every fact of service life – formulating strategic and tactical doctrine, in command assignments at all levels, in staff appointments at unit, formation, and Army Headquarters level, as instructors, in research and development, in foreign assignments, and a wide spectrum of extra-curricular activities. And for their endeavours, they have been recipients of numerous gallantry and distinguished service awards. The story that unfolds will support this view.

The recent spy case in New Delhi involving senior retired officers of the Army Force has sent shock waves through the Christian Community in India which justifiably apprehends that rabid communal elements

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**Maj. General**  
**E. D'SOUZA, PVSM (Ret'd)**

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are likely to flaunt these extremely rare incidents to tarnish the otherwise blemishless image with the brush of disloyalty. Are we, as a community, disloyal, or anti-national, or whatever? Our contribution to national defence or, more succinctly put, to the country's Armed Forces, disproves conclusively any such accusatory views; one swallow does not make a summer nor a molehill a mountain. Indians, including Christians, are blissfully unaware of the solid and substantial contribution made by the relatively small community of some 17-odd million Christians to national defence. This chapter aims to place the record in the right perspective.

This review spans the post-Independence canvas, from August 1947 to date, covering the Christian contribution not only in the three services but in every possible facet of service life both during war and peace.

### **THE INDIAN AIR FORCE**

The Indian Air Force is our youngest service which has and continues to have a large number of Christians in all trades and in all ranks. Who can, for instance, forget the valour of the late Wing Commander Noronha, who earned a Maha Vir Chakra (M.V.C.) in the very first post-Independence operations in Jammu and Kashmir in 1947? He was killed in action. And the Keelor Brothers, Denzil, and Trevor in 1965? Their deeds of valour in taking on Pakistan Air Force Jets - far superior to their own aircraft - will be recounted with awe for so long as wars are discussed. Or, the consummate flying skill of the late Wing Commander Clarence D'Lima, ace VIP Squadron Pilot, who crashlanded the VIP Jet carrying the then Prime Minister, Morarjee Desai, in a small clearing in the jungles around Jorhat? He, too, was killed. Or, the late Air Vice Marshal Ehrlich Pinto who, but for a very unfortunate and untimely helicopter crash in Poonch (J&K) in 1962, would surely have risen to become the Air Chief; he was a flyer of repute and our Air Adviser

in London. He continues to be remembered with affection even today. Equally, can one forget Squadron Leader Reggie Rufus, in those heady days immediately after Independence? He was flying Pandit Nehru in a Dakota and when the aircraft developed trouble (the engine caught fire), displaying a high degree of flying skill and keeping his cool, he crashlanded safely in a paddy field near Coimbatore saving, for India, its first Prime Minister.

In the higher echelons of this glamorous Service, Air Marshal Mally Wollen was, till his retirement, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief of Western Air Command, the premier operational air command. Air Marshal Maurice Barker was AOC-in-C of Eastern Air Command. Recently, Air Marshal Terence D'Sa has had the distinction of being the first Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the newly established Southern Air Command. Air Marshal Naik, a good Christian from Karnataka, retired as the highest Technical Officer in the IAF.

Air Marshal John and Douglas King Lee, both awarded Param Vishisht Seva Medals (PVSMs), were Commandants of the prestigious National Defence College (NDC), New Delhi – the highest seat of learning in the discipline of national defence in the country. Air Vice Marshal Freddy Scudder who was a Senior Instructor at the NDC is now in charge of the faculty of Defence Studies, Madras University. Air Marshal Jena, PVSM, retired as the Vice Chief of Air Staff. Air Marshal Johnny Greene is a four times decorated officer: PVSM, AVSM, Vir Chakra (VrC), and Vayu Sena Medal (VM) and a flyer of repute; he is now Deputy Chief of the Air Staff at Air HQ. Wg Cdr Derek Fernandes has been an ace Navigator in the VIP Squadron for many years. Wg Cdr Raul Rodrigues was a Canberra Bomber pilot and the late Sqn Ldr Nunes flew AN12 transports. Two DeSouzas and a MacMohan flew helicopters with much skill in the 1971 war and over extremely hazardous terrain. Air

Marshall Loretto Pereira and Wg Cdr D'Rosario were systems and computer experts. The late Group Captain Allan D'Costa was awarded the Maha Vir Chakra (MVC) posthumously for gallantry in the 1971 war. Who can forget the legendary Wg Cdr George, one of India's most renowned test pilots, who lost his life testing a new aircraft? Air Commodore David Bouche, a graduate of the NDC, was considered to be the ace Gnat Fighter pilot of the IAF and displayed his prowess conclusively in the 1965 war against Pakistan. His brother, Air Vice Marshal John Bouche was an equally famous flyer. Squadron Leaders George Menezes and Paul Louzado were in our Embassy in Paris. And no contribution of Christians to our Air Force can be complete without mention of Master Warrant Officer George. He is known throughout India as one of the Services' top musicians and composer of many stirring marches.

On 2 July, 1985, Air Marshal Denis Anthony La Fontaine, PVSM, AVSM, VM, was appointed the Chief of the Air Staff in the rank of Air Chief Marshal. La Fontaine is an outstanding fighter pilot. He was awarded the Vayu Sena Medal in 1971, Ati Vishisht Seva Medal in 1973 and Param Vishisht Seva Medal in 1984 for distinguished services of an exceptional order. Air Marshal La Fontaine was commissioned in the flying branch of the Air Force in 1950. During his long and distinguished services career, he held a variety of commands as well as instructional and staff appointments with distinction at various levels including policy-making. He was chief instructor at the Air Force Academy at the time of its inauguration and was personally responsible for the meticulous planning and methodical moving of the entire flying training school from Jodhpur to Dindugal. As the air officer-in-charge (personnel) at the air headquarters, he played a major role in giving a new dimension to employment and optimum utilization of manpower in the Air Force.



Can anyone say that the Christian contribution in the skies has been lacking?

### THE INDIAN NAVY

Our silent sentinels of the sea, the Indian Navy, has an equally enviable record in the contribution of Christian – both upper and lower deck. We have the proud privilege of having two successive Chiefs of Naval Staff (CONS) at the critical period of modernisation and expansion of the Fleet viz. Admiral Ronnie Pereira, PVSM, AVSM, (Retd) and the recently retired CONS Admiral Stan Dawson, PVSM, AVSM. Both these Christian Chiefs were highly respected for their impeccable integrity, unquestioned loyalty, and total dedication. Admiral Dawson, President of the Yachting Association of India, was being considered as Chef de Mission of the Indian Olympic Contingent for the Los Angeles Games. Two successive Flag Officers Commanding-in-Chief of the prestigious Western Naval Command were Christians – both decorated with PVSM: Vice-Admirals Schunker and Barboza. Rear Admiral E.C.Kuruvilla PVSM, AVSM, will long be remembered for his bold and gallant exploits leading the Western Fleet's attack on Karachi in 1971. He retired as a Vice-Admiral from Mazagaon Docks and is now Master of the Hounds in Ooty. Vice Admiral John Pereira, PVSM, a top Engineer, succeeded Vice Admiral Kuruvilla as Chairman and Managing Director, Mazagaon Dock. Naval aviation, a relatively new wing in the Navy, was launched by Captain Douglas, I.N. Thereafter, our naval fleet arm grew under the legendary Commodore R.A.J. Anderson. Their names are synonymous with naval aviators and *INS Vikrant*. Commodore Henry Menezes (Rtd) was not only Director of Naval Intelligence at Naval HQ and a Director in the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), but our Deputy Adviser, London, in the early fifties. The late Commodore Vernon Valladares was one

of the earlier graduates of the National Defence College and Captain of the Flagship *INS Mysore*. Commander (Rtd) Benny Lobo was in Naval HQ and writes extensively on naval matters. Commodore Cyriaco Lobo, recently retired, headed Naval Education and was a Services hockey player of repute for many years. Commodore R. Lewin heads the Naval Wing at the prestigious Defence Services Staff College, a much prized assignment. Captains Dennis Pereira and Lancy Gomes were Deputy Chiefs of protocol, Ministry of External Affairs and Captain Pereira was also Secretary of the Services Sports Control Board, Captain "Pickles" Fernandes was a Secretary to the Chief of Naval Staff. Captain Jimmie Martin, AVSM, was a well-known Public Relations (PR) Officer in the Ministry of Defence and now heads PR in Air India. On the supply side, there was the late Captain F. Nazareth, a graduate of the NDC, and, on the electrical side, Commodore Norman Warner. On the medical side, we have had two Directors, Naval Medical Service – Rear Admirals Faust Pinto and Peck. Another distinguished individual was Rear Admiral de Netto, PVSM (Rtd), Super Specialist in Psychiatry. Other eminent Christians in the Medical Corps were Captains Jimmy Marshall and Joe Rodrigues and Surgeon Commanders Macfarlane and Edgar Saldanha. Anyone who has heard the Naval Band will never forget Commander Wise who conducted it with such serve or Lt. Gomes who composed so many tunes like Konkan Sundari which continues to be played at Republic Day Parades till today. One cannot forget the Christian contribution in the Navy without mentioning the experience of Captain Peter DeBras, a naval flyer on *INS Vikrant*. During one of his take-offs, the catapult malfunctioned and because of lack of power, the Sea Hawk he was flying crashed into the sea. Without hesitation and with remarkable cool, DeBras carried out the ditching drills and, after the prescribed countdown,

pressed the ejection button. He was thrown out into the turbulent sea under the massive hull of the *Vikrant*. But for the presence of mind of the Carrier's Captain, and his own, DeBras would have been sucked into the giant propellers. Thanks to his steadiness under such pressure, DeBras' life was saved. His was the first such under water ejection in operational conditions. He was awarded the Nao Sena Medal (NM) for keeping his wits about him. He later commanded *INS Mysore*.

Christians have made their mark afloat and in the air, as Captains of battleships, fleet commanders and fleet air arm pilots. However, how many do know that we have also produced sub-mariners and divers of equal distinction? Can there be any better example than that of Captain Roy Millan IN, who captained his submarine in enemy waters off Karachi in the 1971 war, reconnoitring the enemy coast for the Western Fleet which launched such an effective missile attack on Karachi? Captain Millan was awarded the VrC. Another well-known submariner, but from the Medical services, was Commander Abraham. Lieut. Duke is a well-known and decorated naval diver. Young Lieut. Saldanha, nephew of the well-known late Commodore George Saldanha, has joined this hazardous arm of the Navy, a pointer that Christians are not lacking in opting for assignments in such dangerous areas. Even in the field of naval architecture, a Christian Officer Commander Dean, made a lasting impression proving the versatility of the community.

There were many such deeds of valour. And many other distinguished Christian sailors – Jesudason, George, Sheppard, Duckworth, Moore, Martis, et al., - served loyally and well and have contributed tangibly to the efficiency and development of our Navy.



## THE INDIAN ARMY

The Indian Army is the largest of the three Services and though there has been no Christian Chief of Army Staff, the contribution, nevertheless, has been most significant. For instance, we have a large number of Christians of other ranks not only in the Technical and Administrative arms but in the Artillery, Engineers, Corps of Signals, and the Infantry – mainly from Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, and Orissa. In the annals of bravery and supreme sacrifice, Lance Naik Albert Ekka of the Brigade of the Guards Regiment was posthumously awarded the country's highest decoration for supreme bravery in action during the 1971 war – one of the handful of servicemen to be awarded the Param Vir Chakra (equivalent to the Victoria Cross or the Congressional Medal of Honour); he was a Bihar Adivasi Christian. The late Capt. Eric Tucker of the Maratha Light Infantry earned posthumously the equally coveted Ashoka Chakra - Class 1, the highest award for valour outside of war, for outstanding gallantry in counter-insurgency operations in Nagaland. Though on the hostile hit-list and therefore a marked man, he spurned the threat with utmost disdain and volunteered for a hazardous patrol in which he was eventually killed.

Lt Gen. Mathew Thomas, PVSM, AVSM, VSM, is the only General to have earned all three grades of the distinguished service award. He was awarded five "blues" for sports at the Indian Military Academy and was the youngest ever Physical Training Officer Instructor posted to that Institution. He is a paratrooper and represented our country in the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission Force in Korea and the Hailie Salassie Academy in Harar, Ethiopia. He retired recently as a Corps Commander. In the 1965 war, three Christian Brigadiers – Stan Menezes (Karu), Eustace D'Souza (Natu La), and Sydney Pinto (Jelep La) held the three major

high altitude passes in Ladakh and Sikkim. In the 1971 war, Christians were to the fore, with Lt Gen. R.S. Noronha, PVSM, MC Deputy Chief of the Army Staff, and Lt Gen. E.G. Pettengell, PVSM, Signals-Officer-in-Chief at Army HQ. In the field, i.e., in actual operations, were Maj. Gen. Ben Gonsalves in Bangladesh, Maj. Gen. Walter Pinto in the Shakargarh Sector, Punjab, and Maj. Gen. E. D'Souza in the Kashmir Sector, all divisional commanders. Maj. Gen. S.L. Menezes, SC, was Chief of Staff of an operational Corps. All four were awarded PVSMs - a most enviable record, indeed.

Christians have made their mark in all facets of Army life. Principal Staff Officers at Army HQ include Lt Generals M.S. Wadalia, P.O. Dunn, PVSM, and R.S. Noronha, PVSM, MC, all Deputy Chiefs of Army Staff before the post of Vice Chief was introduced. Maj. Gen. R.S. Rudra, a Christian from Bengal, was an Adjutant General. Lt. Gen. S.L. Menezes, PVSM, SC (Shaurya Chakra), retired as Vice Chief of the Army Staff. Lt Gen. Lionel Protip Sen was Director of Military Operations in the fateful days of 1962. Lt Gen. T.B. Henderson Brooks, PVSM, and Lt Gen. Eric Vas, PVSM, earned distinction as Eastern Army Commanders responsible for the very knotty problems of counter-insurgency in the North East and internal security. Lt Gen. Walter Pinto, PVSM, was Commandant of the National Defence College and retired as our Central Army Commander. Maj. Gens. Trevor Wilson, PVSM, and A.K. Biswas, PVSM, and the late Brig. Rodrigues, were Directors Ordnance Services in Army HQ. Maj. Gen. Sunith Rodrigues, AVSM, was chief Instructor Army at the Defence Services Staff College and a Divisional Commander in Ladakh; he is now Chief of Staff of a Corps. Maj. Gen. A.C. D'Silva was a Divisional Commander in J&K and is now Director of Organization at Army HQ. Brig. F.T. Dias, who earned gallantry awards in the 1971 war (VrC) and in Mizoram (AVSM) for

counter-insurgency operations and who has served in the Military Operation's and Military Secretary's Directorates in Army HQ, is now a Major General commanding an active division. Among the distinguished Engineers we have had, are Major Generals A.B.C. Mani, Sydney Pinto, VSM, and Stan Burret, PVSM, AVSM. Brigadier Bobby Baretto will soon be a Major General. Maj. Gen. A.H.E. Michigan who was awarded the MVC in 1971 in Bangladesh, retired as a Major General as did Maj.Gen. Trevor Morlin, AVSM. Maj. Gen. Misah Mayadas, PVSM, was our Military Adviser in UK and will soon be a Lieutenant General. Maj. Gen. Jaswant Mayadas, PVSM was Director Weapons and Equipment Army HQ. On the Research and Development side we have Lt Gen. Joseph, PVSM, and Maj. Gen. Robert Williams (retired), Maj. Gen. Nobby Clarke, PVSM retired from the Army Services Corps as did Maj. Gen. Burgess as Deputy Director Supply and Transport.

Other distinguished soldiers were Maj. Gen. Bob Barboza, PVSM, SM (Sena Medal), who, after commanding a Division, retired from Army HQ. As Deputy Adjutant General. Yet another Christian who distinguished himself in command, staff, and instructional appointments was Maj. Gen. F. Freemantle, PVSM; he was selected to attend the Imperial Defence College, UK. To date, Maj.Gen. E. D'Souza has been the only Christian to organize and command the Republic Day Parade; as a Major, he served on the Military Advisers Staff in London. Maj. Gen. Archie Joseph, AVSM, retired as Director of Recruiting Army HQ.

On the Medical side, one of the most renowned Army surgeons ever was Maj. Gen. Joseph. His talents were legendary. There have been many Christian Medical Officers who have followed in his footsteps in all disciplines of medicine and dentistry. Brigadier Barbara Ghosh is the first woman to hold this rank in



the Army Medical Corps. She is a specialist in pediatrics and is on the faculty of the Armed Forces Medical College. We have also produced our share of Commandants of prestigious instructional establishments, viz:

1. Lt Gen. Walter Pinto, PVSM Commandant National Defence College
2. Maj. Gen. E.A. Vas First " College of Combat
3. Maj. Gen. M. Mayadas " Armoured Corps Centre & School
4. Brigadier T. Barretto " School of Signals
5. Brigadier J.V. Pinto AVSM " School of Signals
6. Brigadier P.O. Dunn " Infantry School, MHOW
7. Brigadier Barbosa, SC " Infantry School, MH
8. Lt. Gen. M.W. Thomas, " Indian Military Academy PVSM, AVSM, VSM

Lt Gens. E.A. Vas and S.L. Menezes, Maj. Gen. E. D'Souza, Brig. Joe Nazareth and Col C.L. Proudfoot have been contributing regularly in the media on defence, sports, and social matters. Col Proudfoot excels in Public Relation and was called to New Delhi to handle the Army's PR during the difficult Operation BLUE STAR. An unusually large number of Christian Generals have been elected as Colonels/Colonel Commandants of their Regiments and Corps. This is a much sought-after gazetted appointment, tenable for upto two years after retirement.

The following list of Christian Colonels/Colonel Commandants is a pointer to the esteem in which our Christian Senior Officers are held by their troops:

1. Lt. Gen, T.B. Henderson Brooks, PVSM The Maratha LI
2. Lt. Gen. P.O. Dunn, PVSM 3<sup>rd</sup> Gorkha Rifles

3. Lt. Gen. R.S. Noronha, PVSM, MC\* Madras Regiment
4. Lt. Gen. S.L. Menezes, PVSM, SC The Grenadiers
5. Lt. Gen. Walter Pinto, PVSM The Rajput Regiment
6. Lt. Gen. Mathew Thomas, PVSM, AVSM, VSM The Parachute Regiment
7. Lt.Gen. E.A.Vas, PVSM 9 Gorkha Rifles
8. Maj. Gen. E. D'Souza, PVSM The Maratha LI
9. Maj. Gen. Trevor Morlin, AVSM The Sikh Regiment
10. Lt. Gen. Pettengell, PVSM Colonel Commandant Corps of Signals
11. Maj. Gen. Jaswant Mayadas Colonel Commandant Corps of Signals

### **MILITARY NURSING SERVICE (MNS)**

This Service, catering to the sick and wounded in war and peace and in difficult areas like Leh and Nagaland, has been dominated by Christians, mainly from the South. Two heads of the MNS have been Christians, viz. Major Generals Wolger and Das. In addition, the community has produced quite a few Brigadiers, four Colonels, 15 Lieutenant Colonels and 30 Majors – an impressive record by any standards. Many of these angels of mercy have been decorated for their selfless and distinguished services both in peace and war. Some of the names that come to mind are Thelma D'Cruz, Mary Mathews, Johnson, Olympus, George, D'Souza, Fernandes and others.

### **REPRESENTATION ABROAD**

A number of Christian Officers have been selected for assignments abroad. Brigadier Misbah Mayadas was our Military Adviser in London. Lt Cols. E.G. Pettengell,

A.K. Biswas and S.K. Joshua, Major E. D'Souza and Captain Gerry Nagle were on the Military Adviser's Staff in London. Air Commodore Ehrlich Pinto was the first Air Adviser in London. Squadron Leaders George Menezes and Paul Louzado were on the Air Attache's Staff in Paris and Squadron Leader Hermon on the Air Adviser's Staff in London. Brigadier Reggie Noronha, MC\*, commanded the Indian Brigade in the Congo with considerable dash and personal leadership for which he was awarded the PVSM. Lieutenant Colonel J.D. Stanley commanded a Maratha Light Infantry Battalion as part of the United Nations Emergency Force in Gaza. Major Mathew Thomas and Major Mark Valladares were part of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission Force in Korea. Major Gerry Gonsalves was an Infantry Instructor with the Army Training Team in Botswana, South Africa. Major J.V. Pinto Signals, and MacFarlane were in Indo China. Brigadier Freddy Freemantle was selected to attend the Imperial Defence College course in UK and Captain A.J. Texeira graduated from the Staff College, Camberly, England. Lieutenant Generals Stan Menezes and Eric Vas have been on very select study committees abroad. The list is legion and does not cover our representation in certain African States like Zambia, Nigeria, and Tanzania. The fact remains that by being posted on such missions abroad, the loyalty and efficiency of our Christian Officers have been more than vindicated.

## SPORTS

In addition to their contribution in war – both hot and cold, and peace, our Christian Servicemen have, equally, been in the forefront in the field of sports. Perhaps the most “spectacular” achievement was that of one of India's greatest mountaineers – the late Lt. Col John Dias who had the distinction of leading a number of expeditions including one to the mecca of all



mountaineers – Everest and the Nanda Devi massif. It was a major tragedy not only to mountaineering but to the Army and India when death, in the guise of the dreaded leukaemia, snatched him from our midst. The others who made their mark in this hazardous sport were Mark Valladares of the Engineers and two medics – Colonel Manuel Soares (Ret'd) and Captain Anthony Cruz.

The other major contribution has been in the field of hockey both at the international and national levels. For instance, Christians have provided three goalkeepers for the National Team: Leslie Fernandes (Signals), Allen Schofield (Navy), and Lieut. Romeo James (Army); the last named continues to play for India. The legendary Manuel and V.J. Peter (both of the Madras Engineering Group), Michael Kindo (Navy), and Vincent Lakra, and Justin Kerketta (Army) have donned India's hockey colours. Cyriaco Lobo (Navy) and Anthony Cruz (Army) have both played for the Services. Maj. Gen. D'Souza who was invited to play for Maharashtra in 1949, was elected a National Hockey Selector from 1974 to 1977 and has been on the organizing Committee of the Jawaharlal Nehru and Aga Khan Hockey Tournaments. He was elected to chair the Organizing Committee of the Asian All Stars v/s India Hockey test match played in New Delhi. Lt Col (later Brigadier).

J.V. Pinto represented the Services in squash and was awarded the coveted Services colours. In football, Alphonse, Pearl, and Thangaraj among others, come to mind. In boxing, the Madras Engineering Group has produced Christian Boxers who have represented India, among them being M. Xavier, Denis Swamy, and Das. Brigadier Devine Jones has been a very successful secretary of the Services Sports Control Board and is a member of National and International Associations concerned with Boxing and Athletics.

## CONCLUSION

Christians have occupied with distinction not only the penultimate but ultimate seats of power in the Armed Forces with three Service Chiefs and an impressive share of Vice Chiefs and seniormost operational Commanders on land, at sea, and in the air. The community has been closely associated at levels in policy making, planning, operations, and training. Bravery? A simple Bihari Lance Naik Albert Ekka was awarded the Param Vir Chakra for supreme gallantry beyond the call of duty in the 1971 war. Captain Eric Tucker, equally, was posthumously awarded the Ashoka Chakra - Class 1 for daring in the very difficult counter-insurgency operations in the North East. Lt General Mathew Thomas has been the recipient of all three grades of the distinguished service award. Air Marshal Johnny Greene was four times decorated with the PVSM, AVSM, VrC, and VM. Two Prime Ministers have been saved because of the consummate flying skill of two Christian pilots. During the 1971 war, four Christian Major Generals were decorated with the PVSM, for their qualities of loyalty, integrity, and dedication to duty. Christians have represented the country abroad in UK, France, Indo China, Botswana, Korea, Zambia, Nigeria and elsewhere. Brigadier Noronha earned international acclaim for his efficient handling of a brigade in the very difficult UN operations in the Congo. Equally, Lieut. Colonel Donald Stanley commanded an infantry battalion with distinction with the United Nations Emergency Force in Gaza. Our Medical and Military Nursing Officers have performed their missions of mercy and healing with utmost dedication and devotion. We have produced Commandants of prestigious Services Training Institutions from the NDA to the NDC, military writers, senior staff officers in sensitive appointments, sportsmen, mountaineers, et al. Can there be any doubt of the Christian contribution to National Defence? Be it in terms

of loyalty, bravery, professional competence, or any other activity? The Community has every reason to hold its head high for it has more than proved its credentials in every facet of Services life.

## **Chapter - IV**

### **CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION TO TO INDIAN THOUGHT, CULTURE, AND NATIONAL LIFE**

So vast and variegated is the Christian contribution to national life that several volumes would be necessary to do justice to the subject. What is contained in the pages that follow is far from a detailed or comprehensive survey of the totality of the Christian contribution. We attempt within the scope of this small publication only a review of some prominent features and notable illustrations of Christian endeavour in important dimensions of national life. In this section, we shall review some salient aspects and outstanding examples of the Christian contribution to Indian thought, culture, and national life in general.

Of all the influences that promote refinement in a people, the most vital is religion, since it permeates the spirit of human beings, transforming the external by first transforming the internal. That Christianity has played a fundamental role in moulding the thought and culture

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*Dr Louis D'Silva*

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of India cannot be gainsaid. Differences of opinion there may be over this or that point of her influence, but none can deny that Christianity has made a deep and indelible impression on the mind of India.

In this connection, one cannot help calling to mind, with profound reverence and a grateful heart, the service rendered to our ancient land by great Christian personalities like St Thomas the Apostle of India, St Francis Xavier the Patron of India, Robert de Nobili, Alexander Duff, William Carey, John Wilson, C.F. Andrews, E. Stanley Jones, Krishna Mohan Banerji, Lal Behari Day, Pandita Ramabai, Narayan Vaman Tilak, and Mother Teresa. These, however, are only a few of the more illustrious names among many, many more Christians, past and present, whose number is legion and whose dedicated work for the country most often goes unheard, unhonoured, and unsung.

So exemplary has been the selflessness and so extraordinary the fervour of many a Christian that the phrase "missionary zeal" has become a well-known and commonly employed expression. Is it any wonder, then, that in 1876, the Governor of Bombay, Sir Philip Edmond Wodehouse, introducing a mission deputation to the Prince of Wales, said:

The missions have done more for India's welfare than all other agencies combined.

The phenomenal success of the missionaries was largely due, not only to the fact that many who professed the Christian faith practised it in their lives, but to the power of the Christian ethic itself. To indicate how influential this ethic has been in Indian life and thought, one must needs go back into history.

It was the Christian ethical spirit, encouraged undoubtedly by support from the enlightened section of the non-Christian world, that placed

on the statute book of India measures of social reform of far-reaching import. For example, the suppression of suttee and the campaign against the thugs both had a distinctly humanitarian significance and were carried on in defiance of the legal sanction which they claimed. The reform of the Indian penal code, the abolition of legal slavery, the declaration of infanticide as murder, legislation affecting the age of consent in marriage and permitting widow-remarriage, and legislative action for the reformation of the criminal tribes and for the humanitarian treatment of lepers, lunatics and dumb animals were all integral parts of the same movement and inspired by the same ethic.

"Above all," observes Charles Heimsath, in his work, Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform, "Their spirit of unselfish service and the physical energy devoted to their work made the missionaries exemplars of the social welfare and social reform tradition of modern India." It is an historical fact that the example and stimulus afforded to non-Christian reformers by Christian missionaries have exercised a strong influence on the Indian life. The Indian social movement, in particular, owes much to the revolutionizing influence of Christian social and charitable institutions. For example, the lead that the Christians gave for the emancipation of women in India is widely known. About Christian work for the outcastes of India, scores of excellent books have been written. The impression of Christian charity to the downtrodden thereby created on the mind of India could be illustrated by many quotations of which one, from a non-Christian leader, will suffice:

"The heroism of raising the low from the slough of degradation and debasement was an element unknown

to ancient India. The action of the missionary was an entirely original idea."

It is widely known that not only the modern movement for social reform in India but the chief modern movements for reform within Hinduism were deeply influenced by Christianity. Ram Mohun Roy, the 'Father of Modern India', considered Christian ethics, especially as expressed in the Sermon on the Mount, as the most important Christian religious complement to Hindu spiritual experience. For him, Hindu-Christian dialogue would result in a combination of Gospel-ethics and Vedanta-metaphysics. The ethical challenge of the Christian faith, the basic Christian conviction that love for God must find its expression in the love for man, that good and bad are not totally relative (as certain Vedanta systems taught) but related to the very structure of reality, has inspired many Hindus in the last hundred and fifty years. It was also to some extent a Christian inspiration which made Swami Vivekananda found the Ramakrishna Mission and dedicate it to the service of his compatriots, to their bodily as well as their spiritual needs: this was, in a sense, a break with orthodox Hindu tradition, which did not allow a sannyasi to engage in works of bodily mercy.

The message and example of Christian missionaries did have for many Hindus the religious implication that every human being, as a child of God, has a right to be cared for by his brother in God. Bhakti poets and mystics in the Middle Ages may have taught the same and Hindus in our age rediscovered their teachings, but it is equally true that it was under the Christian inspiration that Hindus added to their contemporary understanding of religion this social and ethical dimension. The theological implications go far deeper and we find them spelled out in detail in the writings of Aurobindo Ghose and Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, the great Hindu

philosopher-theologians of our time. In Radhakrishnan's little book, A Hindu View of Life, a Christian would rediscover much of his own theological anthropology and in Life Divine by Aurobindo Ghose, a Christian could find a good deal of a Christian theology of grace.

The life of Christ is regarded by those who know of it in India as approaching the ideal and Christian values and standards of conduct are given frank admiration. "If men," said a government minister, "loved one another in the spirit in which Christ wished them to, they would evolve an ideal society." The occasional description of Mahatma Gandhi as Christ-like itself signifies an appreciation of the spirit and teachings of Christ. The Bible is studied and quoted as speeches, writings, and newspaper articles show remarkable familiarity with its contents and there can be no doubt that there is general appreciation of the spiritual force of which Christianity is the expression. No single individual perhaps has contributed more to the wide diffusion of Christian thought than the Father of the Nation. His development and use of the principles of Ahimsa, as an active and not merely passive element in life, was due in considerable measure to the Sermon on the Mount which, interpreted through Tolstoy and Ruskin, gave him inspiration and guidance for his practical and political career. The vivid sense of sin of the Mahatma, his faith in human nature when inspired by love, his recognition of the value of the human soul, his insistence on practice and precept of the efficacy of suffering, show strong evidence of Gospel meditation. It was Christianity that first attacked untouchability and other wrong customs of the Indian society. In this regard, Mahatma Gandhi wrote:

My fierce hatred of child marriage I gladly say is due to Christian influence.



. . . Before I knew anything of Christianity, I was an enemy of untouchability. My feelings gathered momentum owing to the fierce attack from Christian sources on this evil.

The recognition of the cardinal principles of the brotherhood of men under the fatherhood of God, the new concept of the worth and freedom of the individual, and the acknowledgement of the truth of the nobility of service to neighbours, could be traced directly or indirectly to Christian teaching and example. Christianity certainly helped to spread a new doctrine of humanity, individual responsibility, and social duty transcending the social group such as the family and the caste.

It is also noteworthy that fundamental political ideals have been enshrined in the Constitution of India. This Constitution has been predominantly modelled on the constitutions and traditions of Western democracies which have, in turn, been considerably influenced by the Christian humanism of the West. While it would be irrelevant, here, to examine the total inspiration drawn by Western democratic ideology from Christian thought, we may at least cite two or three prominent examples. In the Middle Ages, the Christian Fathers vigorously advocated the principle that all men were equal in the sight of God, especially because every human being had a principle of value, a spirit, and this mattered more than rank or wealth or power. The universalist ethics of Christianity denied any difference between high and low, between race and race, between freeman and slave. This not only provided the ideological bedrock of the political ideal of equality, but gave a new sanction to the political ideal of the brotherhood of man and, above all, reinforced the principle of the intrinsic worth of personality. This principle in the end became the cornerstone of Western democratic doctrine. The concept of the secular state also has a basis in Christian

thought. In the concise but profound dictum of its Founder: "Render to Caesar the things which are Caesar's and to God the things which are God's." Christianity, from its inception, has taught a basic dichotomy between the temporal and the spiritual, the realm of Caesar and the realm of God, respectively. This idea of Church-State duality is the cardinal axiom of the secular state from a Christian point of view.

Too subtle to be expressed precisely, the spiritual and ethical influences of Christianity are evident in India in multifarious respects. Its monastic idealism, the captivating mysticism of a St Teresa of Avila, the endearing qualities of a St Francis of Assisi, the conception of 'Our Lady' as the Mother of God, have struck the deepest chords of Indian religious sentiment. It is said, for instance, that Ramakrishna Parahansa went into a trance on seeing a picture of the Madonna. Christianity's stress on love and forgiveness, on meekness and humility, on honesty, simplicity and sincerity in a world of insincerity and show, its ideals of trust in God, hope in death, love of labour and, even more, love of neighbour, have wrought fundamental changes in Indian life and character.

L.S.S. O'Malley pays a handsome tribute to the influence of Christianity in India in his scholarly work, Modern India and the West. His words deserve being quoted at some length:

Though the influence of modern India on the West has been comparatively slight, Western civilization has made a deep impression on the life of India - political, social, religious, economic and cultural. It is hard to distinguish the permanent content of that civilization from temporary forms, but throughout the greater part of the world it may be said to connote three things, the Christian ethic, the rule of law and the conquest of nature by science. The first has been introduced into India by

a diffusion of Christian thought and a system of government embodying Christian principles. The rule of law, which is itself infused by the Christian ethic, has been established, and India has learnt that the weak have rights as well as the strong, that arbitrary force must give way to even justice, and that government is bound by law as much as the private citizen. Law has become the basis of civilization to an extent to which there is no parallel in the previous history of India.

We shall now review some prominent examples of creative Christian endeavour in the areas of language, literature, and scholarship in particular and national life in general.

The Jesuit, Thomas Stevens (1549-1619), carved for himself an indelible niche of fame by his voluminous *Kristaun Puran* or *Christian Purana*, an epic in eleven thousand stanzas which competent scholars hail as a masterpiece of Marathi literature.

Fr. Antonio de Monserratte (1566-1600) must be credited with the honour of being the first person since Ptolemy to make a map of India. Fr Joseph Tieffenthaller (1710-1785) was the first geographer to draw up a fairly accurate map of the Ganges. His greatest work, Historical Geographical Description of India, contains accurate accounts of Indian birds, trees, plants, and flowers that he studied during the 29 years of his tour throughout the country and also of the result of the astronomical and geographical observations which he made during these wanderings. The Jaipur astronomical laboratory still stands as a memorial to his work. Of Fr Eugene Lafont of St Xavier's College, Calcutta, the well-known review, *Nature*, wrote that he was generally acknowledged as one of those responsible for the introduction of modern science into India. His knowledge of Experimental Physics and his unequalled

ability to popularize science in our country earned for Lafont the title of "the Father of Science in India."

Fr Gacome Fenicio (1558-1632) wrote Livro da Seita dos Indo Orientais, the first account of Hindu religion and customs ever written in a European language. About this work, Professor Charpentier makes the following observation: 'It betrays that scholarly spirit which is not always to be found even in later centuries.'

### **ROBERT DE NOBILI S.J. (1577-1656)**

Robert de Nobili was the first European Sanskrit scholar. Max Mueller, the erudite German Indologist, describes the learning of de Nobili in the following words:

A man who could quote from Manu, from the Puranas, nay from the works such as the Apastamba Sutas, which are known even at present only to those few Sanskrit scholars who can read Sanskrit manuscripts, must have been far advanced in the knowledge of the sacred language and the literature of the Brahmins.

De Nobili was also one of the pioneers in the writing of Tamil prose. He enriched Tamil with many words and phrases adapted from Sanskrit. His works include Athuma Nirunayam (The Science of the Soul), Gnana Upathesa Kandam (A kind of Summa Theologica) in four volumes, and Thushana Thikkaram (Refutation of Calumnies). In all, 21 books, besides numerous other writings, are the fruit of his scholarly endeavours. These had a great influence on the educated classes of India. Regarding his learned works, Fr De Proenca remarks:

What I admire most in them, leaving aside the excellence of the matter, the arrangement and order of the subjects, is the fact that he composed them all after becoming blind.



**CONSTANTIUS BESCHI S. J. (1680-1747)**

Beschi will always hold a conspicuous place in Tamil literature. He composed three Tamil grammars and three dictionaries, Tamil-Latin, Tamil-Portuguese and Tamil-Tamil. His *Magnum Opus*, the *Thembavani* (The Unfading Garland), is considered by experts to this day as one of the best Tamil works ever written. It has become an heirloom, reverently transmitted from generation to generation. He wrote 13 works of immortal fame, 6 in poetry and 7 in prose. He is considered by the Tamils as the person responsible for introducing the prose style into their language. The first Tamil grammar, the first Tamil dictionary and the first Tamil novel were written by him, an achievement nothing short of a wonder! The Fifth World Tamil Congress held at Madurai in January, 1981, rightly praised and honoured Beschi by erecting his statue in the city alongwith others who have contributed to Tamil literature.

Beschi was the great pioneer who showed the way to other distinguished scholars like Dr Caldwell who wrote the first comparative grammar of the Dravidian languages, and Dr G. U. Pope who has equally immortalised his name by his translations into English of famous works like *Tirukkural*, *Tiruvasagam*, and *Naladiyar*. This was followed by a series of dictionary-makers like Dr Gundert who compiled the Malayalam dictionary, Rev. Kittel who was responsible for the first Kannada dictionary, Maffei who compiled the Konkani dictionary, and Rebeiro who compiled the Konkani-Portuguese dictionary, all of which still hold the field as the best of their kind.

The *Systema Brahmanicum* and *Historica Criticum Indicarum* of Fra Paulino de San Bartolomeo stand very high to this day in the respective fields of Indian philosophy and history. The work of Abbe Dubois on Hindu Manners and Customs is accepted today as a

classic of its kind. Dr Claudius Buchanan, a historian of the highest merit, produced ponderous volumes of knowledge about India entitled Christian researches. He entered into the study of our country with such absorbing interest that Rev. Kaye made the following comment about him: "Even the news of the death of his wife would not disturb his study of the Syriac language."

### **WILLIAM CAREY (1761-1834)**

Linguist, translator, educationist, a lover of plants and trees and of the people of India. Dr William Carey, a missionary, did immense good to India. In 1814, he made a linguistic survey of India, the first of its kind. He had plans for a great library for books in all the regional languages in India to serve future linguists. The present Carey Library in Serampore contains thousands of precious volumes collected by Carey and his companions. At a time when printing was little known in India. William Carey started type-cutting in various languages of India and of the neighbouring countries. He also made his own ink, paper, and other accessories. Thus, the paper industry and printing in India could consider Carey as one of the great pioneers in the field. Carey encouraged establishing schools in India and in many parts of Asia. An important feature of these schools was that education was imparted in native languages for a certain period or at an early age. Carey was unhappy with the agricultural situation in India and he was determined to improve it. He will be remembered as the founder of the Agricultural Society of India and he also cooperated with Sir William Jones in founding the Asiatic Society.

We have, as the Himalayan result of William Carey's titanic labours, the following achievements: the first complete or partial translations of the Bible in forty languages and dialects of India, China, and Central Asia,

the first prose work and vernacular newspaper in Bengali, the first paper mill and steam engine ever seen in India, the first efforts to educate Indian girls and women, the first medical mission and the introduction of Western medical science to the orient, the first society for the improvement of agriculture and horticulture, the first people's saving bank in the land, and the first translations into English of the great Sanskrit epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. William Carey died in 1834 and his mortal remains rest in this land he loved.

### **JOHN WILSON (1804-1875)**

"India has not seen a greater or a wiser friend and benefactor, nor Christianity itself an abler and more judicious and loving representative than Rev. Dr Wilson." With these touching words, Dr Bhau Daji described and congratulated John Wilson on the fortieth anniversary of his arrival in Bombay.

In addition to making pioneering contributions to the development of various aspects of the cultural life of India such as her languages, literature, education and social reform, Dr John Wilson rendered yeoman service to the advancement of oriental studies in Western India. His particularly noteworthy works which reveal his erudition and his diverse scholarly interests are Karla Caves, Memoir on Cave Temples, Lecture on Religious Excavation of West India, English and Marathi Languages, Introduction to Molesworth's Marathi Dictionary, India Three Thousand Years Ago, Raddi-I-Din Musalmani, Parsi Religion as contained in the Zen-Avasta, History of the Suppression of Infanticide in Western India and Aboriginal Tribes of Bombay Presidency.

Today, 9 educational institutions, 2 in Jalna, 4 in Pune and 3 in Bombay, notably the Wilson College, working under the aegis of the John Wilson Education

Society, commemorate the life and work of this great scholar, educator and benefactor of India.

Regarding the general modernizing role in India of Christians, a non-Christian Tamil author, Ka Naa Subramanyam, in his book, *The Catholic Community in India*, observes:

Having accepted the modernisation-Westernization process so far, it is our duty to recognize the service that the Catholics in particular and the Christians in general have done to India in modernizing it in so far as it lay in their powers, under circumstances that were fairly difficult!

So enormous has been the contribution of Christian missionaries to the advancement of India's languages and literature in particular that it evoked praise from no less a personage than Jawaharlal Nehru. Christian mission work, in this respect, "has undoubtedly been of great service to India," Pandit Nehru observed in his celebrated work, *The Discovery of India*:

The printing of books and newspapers broke the hold of the classics and immediately prose literatures began to develop in the provincial languages. The early Christian missionaries, especially of the Baptist Mission at Serampore, helped in this process greatly. The first private printing presses were set up by them and their effort to translate the Bible into prose versions of the Indian languages met with considerable success. There was no difficulty in dealing with the well-known and established languages, but the missionaries went further and tackled some of the minor and undeveloped languages and gave them shape and form, compiling grammars and dictionaries for them. They even laboured at the dialects of the primitive hill and forest tribes and reduced them to writing.



We shall now review the contributions of significance to national life, in general, by some eminent Christians in relatively recent and contemporary times. It should be noted that the personalities mentioned below are only a few in a long list of Christian scholars, educationists, doctors, social workers, journalists and creative writers, artists, and others who, in one field or another, have made a significant contribution to national life.

### **NARAYAN VAMAN TILAK (1861-1919)**

Among the noblest names of modern India is that of Narayan Vaman Tilak – poet and patriot. A striking personality in various respects, Tilak exerted much influence in Western India. Born in a Chitpavan Brahmin family with a flair for poetry – what more could one ask? The birth gave him standing, the poetry soon gave him fame. For over two hundred years no great poet-voice had spoken in the land of the Maharashtrians. Now it seemed as though Eknath or Ramdas or Tukaram was again in their midst. Two strains were deeply mingled in Tilak – a profound religious feeling and a passionate love of his native country. Both strains spoke clearly in all his writings. Steeped in the great literature of his people, he eagerly desired that the great golden days might once again come to them. And who could best usher them in but one who so eagerly felt their need? So dreams of a new religion were born in him – he would found one all by himself! However, before his plans could be completed, he heard of an old religion which seemed ever new. Tilak accepted Christianity in 1895. Years prior to becoming a Christian, he became convinced that India's future lay through the "gateway of religion." In fact, he envisioned the evolution of a world religion that would unite all mankind in a single brotherhood. In the Christian religion, he found the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of humanity.

Tilak's conversion made a great stir in Maharashtra. It was bad enough in itself, but had they also lost their poet, their flaming patriot? His compatriots soon came to see, however, that nothing had been lost. His poetry flowed on, but with a richer texture and a lovelier music. Tilak's Christian experience only increased his love for his country and for his mother tongue, Marathi. He played a unique role in the revival of Marathi poetry that took place in the closing years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He wrote both secular and devotional poems and flourished as a poet of flowers and children. He carried into effect the healthy influence of the Wordsworthian school, and led Marathi poetry out of doors to enjoy the beauty and freedom, and breathe the pure air of God's nature. Thus, he became popularly known as the Wordsworth of Maharashtra and the Rabindranath Tagore of Western India.

Tilak's chief work lay in the Seminary of the American Marathi Mission, but he also wrote much poetry, edited papers - notably the *Dnyanodaya* - and was very eager in all social service. Much of his social service was done through what he called the Christ-Sadan, where the enquirer after truth, the forlorn and the fallen might come, and where a voluntary worker might live while being engaged in some social service. However, alongwith all other forms of work went the writing of his great bhajans, so that today no part of the Christian Church in India is as rich as that in the Maratha country in the realm of Christian song. His greatest work, a *Christayana*, was regrettably never completed.

In Narayan Vaman Tilak there was always a burning patriotism. This was reflected in much of his poetry "Bran shall I eat and rags shall I wear, for the sake of thy love, my Motherland, and shall throw in dust all that passes for glory and happiness," he sings in one of his lofty verses. In a national anthem he composed, he beseeches

God to take care of his Motherland. He inspired thousands of his compatriots to the path of "constitutional agitation" and "self-government" for India. He was a member of the Home Rule League founded by Kaka Joseph Baptista and Bal Gangadhar Tilak in 1916. Interestingly, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Narayan Vaman Tilak were contemporaries, but differed in political temperament. The latter always believed that a moderate nationalist programme would be the wiser path to follow. This is why the two Tilaks have been referred to as Tilak the Lion and Tilak the Lamb. Vaman Tilak won the confidence of the Christian community and urged the community to become a force on the side of Indian nationalism. As a man of forceful personality, he did much to promote the cultural integration and happy co-existence between Christians and other religious sections of Indian society.

Vaman Tilak revered India's spiritual and intellectual heritage and delighted in the devotional poetry of the earlier Maharashtrian saints on which his spiritual life had been nurtured. He confessed that it was over the bridge of Tukaram's verse that he came to Christ. He chafed at all that savoured of purely Western culture and alien rites imposed on the Indian Church. He wished to retain the essential deposit of Christian faith and life, clothing it in Indian forms and preserving the essential marks of the Indian spirit and religious heritage. Therefore, towards the end of his life he devoted himself wholeheartedly to the formation of a wholly Indian Church which he called "God's Darbar." Alas, his body had already stood more strain than it could, and only a brief period of this work was left to him. On the 9 of May, 1919, his singing spirit passed away, but about his funeral there was an air of festival, for he now looked face to face upon Him who had inspired his loftiest songs. Today, his singing goes on in the heart of the Marathi church though his own voice is still, while his

intense love for the country is growing in the Church of India as a whole.

### **HENRY HERAS S.J. (1888-1955)**

Fr Henry Heras was a historian of great eminence who devoted his life to the study and discovery of our country's past. He dug and delved deep into Indian history to display to the world the glorious tradition and culture of India. Dr John Correa –Alphonso, S.J., a Director of the Heras Institute and an old student of Henry Heras, describes his teacher in the following words:

India for him was not only a subject for study, it was an object of love. His love for India and her people was a love at first sight. The millenary culture and history of the country captivated him, and he dedicated himself heart and soul to their study.

In 1926, Heras established the Indian Historical Research Institute at St Xavier's College, Bombay. The Institute was later renamed the Heras Institute of Indian History and Culture. It is a pioneer institution in the field of historical investigation in India, and the ambition of its founder was to train scholars and produce a school of Indian historians. By the time of his death in 1955, Heras had seen over three hundred students from all over India doing post-graduate and doctoral research. Many of his students are prominently placed with historical and archaeological study centres throughout India. His students include noted historians and archeologists like M.. Dikshit, G.M. Moraes, B.A. Saletore, and H.D. Sankalia.

Heras himself had written 13 books and over 200 scholarly articles. Some of his significant works are: La Dinastia Manchu en China, The Writing of History, Notes on Historical Methodology for Indian Students, The Aravidu Dynasty of Vijayanagara, The Pallava Geneology, Studies in Pallava History, The Beginnings of



Vijayanagara History, Minkan, The Story of the Magi, and Studies in Proto-Indo-Mediterranean Culture.

With inexhaustible energy and enormous labour, Fr Heras gradually established a valuable library of some 26,000 volumes with an excellent collection of learned journals. The library is especially rich in the field of ancient and medieval Indian history and among its rarities is the only extant copy of the first book printed in Bombay. The museum of the Heras Institute has grown steadily and among its treasures are Mesopotamian seals, hundreds of Vaishnava, Shaiva and Jain icons, and priceless ancient sculptures, copper-plates, coins, and paintings.

Heras was one of the founders of the Indian History Congress. His services as a teacher and historian won him wide recognition and earned for him a place on several academic bodies, notably, the Indian Historical Records Commission and the International Committee of Historical Sciences. Heras contributed much to the development of historical research in India by his pioneering work. He gained international fame among Indologists for his interpretation of the inscriptions on the Indus Valley seals, and made a great contribution to our knowledge of the Indus Valley civilisation. By combining all the best in the Western techniques of scholarship and an unusual capacity to understand and interpret Eastern philosophies, Heras promoted that synthesis of the cultures of East and West through which, as many great minds have thought, human civilization can attain its best.

The famous Heras Institute of Indian History and Culture is a fitting memorial to the name and work of Henry Heras. In 1981, the Government of India honoured Fr. Heras with a commemorative postage stamp for his outstanding contribution to historical science and archaeology. It is noteworthy that the only other Jesuit

to have a stamp issued in his honour by the Indian government is St Francis Xavier.

### **GEORGE PROKSCH S. V. D.**

On 1 January, 1984, Fr George Proksch, a German national by origin, who is affectionately known in India as Guru Gyan Prakash, completed 50 years of dedicated service to his adopted land. One of the leading exemplars of Christian efforts toward cultural integration, Proksch conveys the Christian message to the people around him through the medium of their own art, culture, and language. He started composing Christian hymns and songs as far back as 1935. One of his first hymns, 'Shri Yesu Bhagawan Ki Kariye jai jai kar', won admiration from people of all communities, being remembered and sung even today.

Like the ancient rishis, Proksch lives in a Parnashala called "Gyan Ashram." The Ashram was founded in 1955 on a piece of land donated by one of his admirers amidst the dense jungle of a hillock in Andheri, Bombay. It houses a School of Yoga and a School of Dance-Music which awards degrees and diplomas to its candidates, being affiliated to the Bhatkhande Sangeet Mahavidyapeeth of Lucknow. 1954 saw a luminous new star in the history of the Christian Church in India. A dance-drama was composed and presented by Fr Proksch on the occasion of the National Marian Congress in Bombay. "For many of us, you have stolen the show of the Marian Congress and given us a thing of beauty that will remain a joy forever," wrote Jerome Malenfant, Head of the Commission of Indian Christian Art. "I am proud of you," said Valerian Cardinal Gracias. This was what he always wanted, said the Cardinal, but it required the genius of Fr Proksch to express it in Indian song and dance.

Thereafter, Fr Proksch has staged several dance-dramas of which two deserve a mention. In 1960, Fr

Proksch and his Indian troupe were invited to Germany. His performance in Munich before an audience of 3,00,000 people won acclaim for the entire group. In 1964, at the International Eucharistic Congress in Bombay, 'Anutam Prem' (No Greater Love) was presented. It was in every detail a massive work of genius with its three hundred dancers, its orchestra of one hundred musicians, its choir of one thousand singers, its enormous 150-feet wide stage, its vast auditorium seating fifty thousand spectators and its colossal theme which spanned the history of man from the creation to the redemption.

Fr Proksch is also a prolific author and composer. He has more than forty books to his credit, some of them published in several editions. His Mahakavya Isayana, written after the model of the Ramayana of Valmiki, is a classic. His short plays and dramas are many, among which *Chhumantar*, *Kusum Kali* and *Garibon Ka Mahal* are outstanding. His song compositions are numerous, many of which like *Shradhanjali*, *Rag Parag* and *Bharat Git*, are in book form. He has translated the Book of Psalms termed *Mangal Gaan*, fusing the psalms with melodious Indian music. This work, with its combination of Indian and Western musical notation, has acquired popularity even in Europe. Proksch is of the view that "the Indian style is flexible, story telling and fundamentally devotional Indian music which goes with it, is akin to Gregorian, and the two can blend in telling tale which is Indian and universal."

*Uske Liye* is one of the well-known novels of George Proksch. The theme of the novel has been his own life-theme. For half a century, his love and work for India has only been an overflow of his love for God and for his neighbours. On the occasion of his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, one of his earliest disciples who has been associated with him

for a quarter of a century, gave expression to the following sentiments about Guru Gyan Prakash:

Today, does this man radiate peace? He is the one who has made full use of the talents the Lord has given him. He has walked through the fire of suffering and achieved greatness. He has fulfilled his mission in life and brought together two great cultures, nay, two continents - Europe and Asia.

In 1983, the Federal Republic of Germany honoured George Proksch, who has become a living legend, with its highest award, the order of Merit termed in German, Bundes Verdienst Cruz Erste Klasse.

### **VALERIAN CARDINAL GRACIAS (1900-1978)**

Archbishop of Bombay from 1950 to 1978, he was an outstanding leader in the post-modern history of the Church in India. Cardinal Gracias had the unique honour of being the first Indian to be elevated to the College of Cardinals. Valerian Gracias made his own distinctive contribution to national life. A great educator and a builder with drive and vision, he was responsible for the establishment of several institutions in the city of Bombay (now Mumbai). A scholar and orator of eminence, he was the author of Heaven and Home, Features of Christian Life, The Chief Duties of Christians as Citizens, Decline of Public Morals, and The Vatican and International Policy. His numerous speeches and writings have been compiled into a fine volume entitled Cardinal Gracias Speaks. Cardinal Gracias was a staunch nationalist. Described as 'India's unofficial ambassador of goodwill' to foreign countries, he did much to gain for India goodwill and assistance abroad.

Cardinal Gracias was Host of the very memorable 38<sup>th</sup> International Eucharistic Congress and President of the Congress Organization. A man of devout prayer and



implicit faith, he showed remarkable courage, making history for India and the Church, in accepting Pope John's choice of Bombay for the Congress venue. His unrelenting endeavour over 4 years and extraordinary organizing ability were mainly responsible for carrying out the Herculean task of holding India's first International Eucharistic Congress with the phenomenal success which all who attended it from all parts of India and the world have acknowledged with unanimous acclaim. The Congress, which was held in 1964, was attended by Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, Vice-President Zakir Hussain and Pope Paul VI. For his distinguished services to the nation and to the Church in India, Cardinal Gracias was awarded the prestigious Padma Vibushan in 1964.

#### **HERMENEGILD SANTAPAU S. J. (1903-1970)**

Fr Santapau studied at the Imperial College of Science and Technology, London, and secured his doctorate in Botany with a thesis on the Flora of Khandala on the Western Ghats. For two years, thereafter, he did post-doctoral work in the Herbarium of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Surrey, England. He joined the staff of St Xavier's College, Bombay, in 1940. In 1954, he was on a contract for one year with the Government of India as Chief Botanist to revive and reorganize the Botanical Survey of India. So well did he execute the work he was entrusted with that he was appointed to the same post with the designation of Director, Botanical Survey of India, in 1961 for two years and a half. Santapau actually served in the post for seven years till June, 1968, when he returned to St Xavier's to guide students doing research for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Santapau's publications of books, articles, and notes crossed the 300 mark. He was connected with the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research and served on several Government and University Committees. He

either conducted or was a member of many tours of botanical exploration. The number of botanical specimens collected by him exceeded 1,00,000. Most of them are preserved in Bombay, but his representative collections are also preserved in Kew Gardens, England, the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University, the Missouri Botanical Garden, and various other national and international herbaria.

Even after Fr Santapau laid down his office, the Indian Government continued to solicit his collaboration on numerous committees and commissions. On the occasion of his death in 1970, the then Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi, sent the following condolence message:

In Fr Santapau's death we have lost an eminent scholar who has served education and science for more than forty years. His deep love of India urged him to become a citizen of the country. He had great knowledge of and concern for our plant wealth and wrote extensively on it for experts as well as laymen. May his memory long continue to inspire all those interested in our flora.

### **FRANK ANTHONY**

Educated at Christ Church High School and Robertson College, Jabalpur, and in London, Frank Anthony had a brilliant academic career. He won the Viceroy's All-India Gold Medal for English. It was remarked by the members of the World Touring Team of American University Debators that he was the most outstanding speaker in all the contests in which they had participated in India. On his return from London, after being called to the Bar at the Inner Temple, young Anthony set up practice and earned an abiding reputation within a short time.

At 34 years, Anthony became the worthy successor to his able predecessor and mentor, Col. Sir. Henry Gidney. After Gidney's death in 1942, Frank Anthony became the President-in-Chief of the All India Anglo-Indian Association and was also nominated to fill the seats vacated by Sir Henry in the Central Legislative Assembly and the National Defence Council. Elected to the Constituent Assembly of India in 1946, Mr Anthony was a member of several important committees. His legal knowledge and reputation helped him to become a member of the 'Inner Committee' set up by the Congress for the Drafting of the Constitution. The same year Anthony was selected as one of India's representatives to the U.N. General Assembly. The team, which was led by Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit, constituted the first body of Indians, chosen by free India, to represent India in a World Council. In 1948, Anthony was one of India's representatives at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference. He became a Member of the first Indian Parliament in 1950.

One of India's most polished and experienced parliamentarians, Frank Anthony has been a Member of the Union Parliament from its inception. His forceful oratory, ease and fluency in debate and parliamentary finesse and manners, have been exemplary and have always commanded the attention of a House whose standards and decorum have suffered progressive decline. In the Parliament, he usually makes valuable contributions on subjects relating to defence and the railways. He has been a member of the Standing Advisory Committee of the Ministry of Defence, the Railway Finance Committee, and the Central Advisory Council for Railways. Every year when the Railway Budget is presented in Parliament, Mr Anthony is never found wanting for constructive criticism of the railway administration. As President of the National Union of

Railwaymen, Anthony has contributed much to the welfare of railway employees in India.

The accredited leader of his community and its articulate spokesman, Frank Anthony's theme-song from the start was that the Anglo-Indians were Indians by nationality and only Anglo-Indians by community. He made it clear that the All India Anglo-Indian Association would only subscribe to nationalistic policies calculated to promote the commonweal. As early as 1949, Anthony said:

I have regarded my work, on behalf of my community, as a trust. The guiding motive has been to lead it on broad national lines so that it could take its place as a recognized, cordially accepted, and not unimportant section of the Indian people. My community has much to give to India, too. Its loyalty to its work, its civic stability, and its sense of discipline are some factors which are making themselves felt today. The key positions Anglo-Indians have occupied for long years in communication departments, like railways and posts and telegraphs, is well-known. The part played by Anglo-Indian fighter pilots in the Kashmir campaign and by Anglo-Indian officers with our armed forces in Hyderabad, is an indication of the contribution which my community can, and will, make in the new India.

Anthony has frequently asserted that the Anglo-Indian community, though microscopic in size, has made and will continue to make a contribution to national life out of all proportion to its numbers. This contribution has been particularly impressive in education, in the building of India's great national assets, the railways,



the telegraphs and the customs, in the noble profession of nursing and in the indelible impress the community has left on the military annals of independent India, "inscribed by Anglo-Indians in blood and in valour."

Anthony was a member of the National Integration Council set up by Jawaharlal Nehru in 1961 and was appointed a member again of the Council reconstituted by Mrs Indira Gandhi in 1967. He has brought about such integration, reconciliation, and comradeship between Anglo-Indians and the rest of the Indian community that today the Anglo-Indian is no longer looked upon with prejudice and misunderstanding. Author of the well-known work, Britain's Betrayal in India: The Story of the Anglo Indian Community, and Editor of *The Review*, India's most widely circulated monthly, Frank Anthony has done much to win the goodwill and respect of the Indian people for his small but gallant community and to foster the active role of the latter in the life of the nation. This is his most enduring contribution to the national polity.

### **FRANK MORAES (1907-1974), FORTHRIGHT WRITER AND JOURNALIST**

A rare combination of ability, information, and fearlessness, Frank Moraes was a colourful personality with a colourful literary style. He was a President of the Rotary, Bombay, a President of the Press Guild of India for several years and a former Sheriff of Bombay, a position traditionally reserved in this cosmopolitan city for citizens of substantial worth.

A doyen among journalists, Moraes has served as an Editor of the *Times of Ceylon*, *The National Standard*, *The Indian Express* and *The Times of India*. In the *Times of India*, one of the most powerful newspapers of the sub-continent, he rose to the editorial chair from the lowest rung in the daily news paper field, - a sub-

editorship. With his wide background of experience and exceptional calibre as a journalist, Frank Moraes was described in his heyday as "undoubtedly the best known, most widely travelled, and most distinguished Indian journalist in the world today."

In 1952, Moraes was nominated a member of the Official Indian Cultural Delegation to China. On the conclusion of that mission, he published his *Report on Mao's China* in 1953. The book was widely acclaimed by the press and the public, especially in Britain and the U.S.A., as a discerning study of the new China which was then looming over the world horizon. Previously, he had published, in collaboration with Robert Stimson, Introduction to India and The Story of India. His subsequent publications Yonder One World, The Revolt in Tibet, India Today, Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, Without Fear or Favour, Witness to an Era: India 1920 to the Present Day and Nehru: Sunlight and Shadow, established his reputation as an author of international status.

These works, together with his numerous articles and editorials in *The Times of India* and *The Indian Express*, placed him among the selected group of writers whose shrewd observation, informed judgement and constructive criticism help to influence public opinion in their countries. For many years his writings, always enlivened by touches of wit and humour, contributed much to guiding the opinion of the public in the world's largest democracy.

Though Mr Inder K. Gujral, Minister of Information and Broadcasting, referred to the death of Moraes in 1974 as "marking the end of an epoch in Indian journalism," the latter received no official award. However, Frank Moraes needed none. His best reward was the respect of his colleagues and the esteem of millions of his readers.

Other eminent attainments of Christians in the field of journalism are those of K.M. Cherian, Pothan Phillip, and Pothan Joseph who were awarded the Padma Bhushan in 1971, 1972, and 1973 respectively, and that of B.G. Verghese who received the Magsaysay Award for Journalism, Literature, and the Communication Arts in 1975.

### **VICTOR PARANJOTI (1906-1967) – 'A TOWERING MUSICAL PERSONALITY'**

Described by Western commentators as a "towering musical personality," Victor Paranjoti excelled as a composer and conductor. He studied music under Westlake Morgan and Sir Henry wood in Europe. Paranjoti was an accomplished organiser, painter, singer, playwright, lecturer, and critic of music and ballet. He wrote the dialogue, music, and lyrics for the operas he produced. His Indian compositions are marked by brilliance and a deep understanding of Indian music. He founded the Bombay Madrigal Singers' Organization, The Delhi Choral Society, and The Bombay Amateur Light Opera Sabha. From 1938 to 1947, Paranjoti was closely connected with All India Radio as station director in Madras, Calcutta, and Bombay and as Deputy Director-General in New Delhi.

Driven all his life by the pursuit of perfection and the urge to create beautiful music, Victor Paranjoti fashioned out of a group of amateur singers a chorus that won the highest acclaim throughout Europe from discerning critics and audiences. "Indian choir matchless," "indescribably captivating," "artistic standards difficult to surpass," raved the Western press. The famous Paranjoti Chorus, which toured Europe and West Asia, put India on the musical map of the world and demonstrated that Indian amateur singers, under competent direction, could compare with and even

surpass the great ensembles of the West. The Chorus gave recitals at many international choral festivals and received standing ovations from audiences abroad. "Do not forget you are ambassadors for India," Paranjoti would remind the members of his group.

Paranjoti endeavoured to achieve a synthesis between Indian and Western music. He tried to adapt Indian music to choir and operatic singing. Many of his compositions are based on classical ragas and his songs are always in their native language, - Konkani, Tamil or Hindi. About one third of his repertoire consisted of folk and classical music. 'Why must we be apathetic to Western music merely because it is alien? Why should we not learn this art, evolve a synthesis between it and our own music and hence enrich our heritage?' These were significant questions Paranjoti raised.

**Rev. Fr CAMILLE BULCKE S.J. (1909-1982) –  
OUTSTANDING HINDI SCHOLAR**

On August 17, 1982, died India's most famous Christian Hindi scholar, the Jesuit Camille Bulcke. In his love for Indian culture, he developed a taste for Hindi and was determined to master the language. He pursued the study of Hindi with such enthusiasm that he finally acquired a doctorate in the same language at the Prayag University, Allahabad, in 1950. The subject of his thesis was the 'Ram-Katha: Its origin and Development', his area of specialization being the Rama story. Besides his learned doctoral thesis, his notable scientific publications are Nil Panchi, Rama Katha aur Tulsidas, and The English –Hindi Dictionary which is his most widely known and much used book. Fr Bulcke undertook to translate the entire Bible into Hindi. He succeeded in publishing the New Testament in 1977. He hoped to complete the Old Testament within a few months when death overtook him.



Bulcke soon became an authority on the Hindi language. His excellence in the literary field was officially acknowledged as early as 1950 when the Governor of Bihar nominated him, with 30 other scholars, a founder-member of the Bihar Sahitya Academy. He was appointed by the Central Government on several committees of national importance. He was invited to national conventions and meetings and was a member of various literary societies at the state and national level. In 1974, Bulcke was awarded the Padma Bhushan by the President of India for his outstanding services to Hindi literature.

The late Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi, in her condolence message to his fellow Jesuits, relations and friends, said about Fr. Bulcke:

"He became one of the foremost authorities on the **Ramayana** and interpreted 'Tulsi Das with rare insight'. She added that the Hindi language and literature suffered a 'great loss' in his death.

Camille Bulcke leaves behind a big void among Christian writers in Hindi, among Hindi language promoters at the national level and, above all, in the Dharmik Sahitya Samiti of which he was President.

### **MALCOLM ADISESHIAH – EMINENT ECONOMIST, EDUCATIONALIST, AND CIVIL SERVANT**

Dr Adiseshiah studied at The Madras University, at the London School of Economics, and at King's College, Cambridge, where he obtained a doctorate in economics. From 1931 to 1946, he taught economics at the Universities of Calcutta and Madras and thereafter served for two years as Associate Secretary General of the World University Service.

He joined the Secretariat of the United Nations Educational Social and Cultural Organisation in 1948 and

served the Organization for twenty-two years. In his capacities as Assistant and then Deputy Director General of UNESCO, he was specially concerned with the Organization's Technical Assistance to underdeveloped countries, representing the Secretariat on the United Nations Technical Assistance Board since its inception in 1950. More recently, he carried similar responsibilities in relation to UNESCO's projects financed by the United Nation's Special Fund and helped to formulate the educational programmes of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Adiseshiah played a key role in the formulation of educational plans for Asia and Africa. Unesco's General Conference paid tribute to him in the following words:

"In the discharge of his high duties, he has served the Organisation with unstinting devotion and energy, labouring untiringly, in particular to advance the cause of development and international cooperation."

After his return to India on leaving UNESCO, Dr Adiseshiah has served as Vice-Chancellor of Madras University and was nominated a member of the Rajya Sabha by the President of India. Adiseshiah was the founder of the Institute for Development Education in Madras. The Institute has done useful work in such areas as development education in both urban and rural areas, promotion of integrated rural development through its project, *Roofs for the Roofless*, education for international justice and peace, and in the field of research publications and creative writing. Adiseshiah has written extensively on economic themes. His most notable books are Let My Country Awake: The Human Role in Development, Review of Mid-Year Review of the Economy 1983 (with C.B. Balakrishnan), Social Sciences in India: Retrospective and Prospective – (A Report in Two Volumes), Some Thoughts on Adam Smith's Theory of Division of Labour and Indian Education in 2001.

**JACOB CHANDY**

Educated in the Madras Medical College and in the Pennsylvania and McGill Universities, Dr Jacob Chandy was the first Indian neurosurgeon. He served the reputed Christian Medical College Hospital at Vellore in various administrative capacities and was its Principal for six years. Dr Chandy was mainly responsible for the establishment of the Department of Neurology and Neurosurgery, the first department of its kind to be established in a medical college in India. In 1949, the Christian Medical College Hospital pioneered in these areas of medicine, thus meeting the great need in India for treatment of diseases of the brain, the spinal cord, and the nerves.

Dr Chandy soon established a reputation as one of the best neurosurgeons in the country. With over a hundred research publications to his credit, the work done by Chandy on the brain and the spinal cord particularly won both national and international recognition. He was awarded the Fellowship of the Indian Academy of Sciences, the Indian Academy of Medical Sciences, the International College of Surgeons and the International College of Angiology. He was designated by the Government of India as Consultant in Neurosurgery to the Armed Forces. Dr Chandy is a member of the Board of Governors of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi, and the Jawaharlal Institute of Post-Graduate Medical Education and Research, Pondicherry. In appreciation of his distinguished services in the field of neurology, Dr Jacob Chandy was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 1964.

**V.V. JOHN – EMINENT EDUCATIONALIST**

Dr V.V. John was educated in Kerala and at Oxford University. When the Utkal University was established

in 1944, he became its Registrar, giving him his first experience of educational administration which has become a life-long interest. He has served as Principal of Government College, Ajmer, as the Director of Education, Rajasthan, and as the Vice-Chancellor of the Jodhpur University, positions in which he initiated several progressive measures. A former Member of the Minorities Commission and the President of "Citizens for Democracy," the public-spirited Dr John is associated with several organizations and activities in the country.

A prolific writer, Dr John has written quite extensively, and with the most delightful wit and humour, on education in general and on Indian higher education in particular. He has been a candid but constructive critic of what he considers an outworn educational system. John has advocated radical change in the curricula, teaching methods, and examination system in the present educational set-up. His numerous articles on Indian education are notable for their wide coverage, deep understanding, and incisive analysis of the problems that afflict the Indian educational system. His significant works include Education and India's Poverty, Education and Language Policy, Freedom to Learn: The Challenge of the Autonomous College, Misadventures in Higher Education, Freedom, Great Classroom Hoax and other Reflections on India's Education, The Orbiting Professor, and Light Luggage.

### **VARGHESE KURIEN - FATHER OF DAIRY DEVELOPMENT**

Citing his "energy and vision in developing the dairy industry in India," Michigan State University, USA, conferred its highest honorary degree, Doctor of Science, upon Dr Varghese Kurien in 1965. The citation read in part:



You have distinguished yourself in your native land as an engineer, administrator and civil servant. In developing the dairy industry of India, you have advanced the welfare of thousands of your countrymen and have contributed notably to agricultural and industrial progress.

Dr Kurien was presented by the President of India the "Man of the Year Award, 1974" for his "outstanding contribution in the field of dairy development which had ushered in a revolution in rural development." Kurien is eager to apply the Anand experience to many other areas in the country. Indeed, the novel experience of a quarter million farmers spread over 2,500 square miles in Gujarat has profoundly influenced the course of events in that part of India and is gradually spreading its impact to the rest of the country.

Some of the positions held and awards won by Kurien would also be indicative of his very signal contribution to national life. He is a member of the Gujarat State Plan Advisory Board, a nominee-director of the Industrial Finance Corporation of India, President of the Indian Dairy Association, Chairman and Managing Director of the Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation, and Chairman of the Indian Dairy Corporation and of the National Dairy Development Board. Dr Kurien was conferred the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership, 1963, the Padma Bhushan, 1966, the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws, Glasgow University, 1974, the Business Leadership Award of the Madras Management Association, 1978, and the Vishwa Gurjari Award, 1980.

### **CARLOS VALLES S. J. – THE GEM AMONG GUJARATI WRITERS**

The Jesuit, Carlos Valles, has the unique distinction of being the greatest living writer in the Gujarati

language today! This honour comes in the wake of the Ranjitram Gold Medal, the highest award for Gujarati literature conferred on Fr Valles by the Gujarati Sahitya Sabha in 1983. This was the climax to a series of awards and prizes which Valles received for his many books. Earlier, he had won the Kumar Gold Medal for his book, Vyakti Shadhtar, a systematic study of character formation for the young, serialized in the pages of the magazine, Kumar. He had also won the Shri Aurobindo Gold Medal for his book, Tarun Ashram, which dealt with the social, moral, and religious aspects of the problems of youth. He won the Government of Gujarat Prize for the best book published during a calendar year for 5 years in succession. Eventually, the Board that chooses the winner had to rule that no one could be awarded the prize more than five times. Otherwise, Fr Valles might have continued to win the prize every year!

Valles contributes regularly to the Sunday editions of two papers, Gujarat Samacher, Ahmedabad, and Janmabhoomi, Mumbai. He is also a much sought-after speaker. He has been invited to deliver numerous talks and lectures both in India and abroad. The Education Board of the Gujarat Government has included chapters from his books as lessons in Gujarati textbooks from standards Eight to Twelve. In 1979, it may be noted, the Chanderia Foundation invited Valles to London to address the Gujarati community there. The community undertook to buy and distribute free among Gujarati institutions and groups in England five hundred sets of all his books. From 1968, All India Radio began broadcasting talks by Fr Valles in its weekly programme, "Youth Forum."

The most popular works of Valles are: Gandhiji and Navi Peddhi, a spiritual biography of the Mahatma, and Jivan Darshan, a book of meditations, both of which won government prizes; Lagnasagar, a book of marriage counselling, which has become a cherished wedding

gift; and Atma Kathana Tukada, the author's autobiography, which has proved to be his masterpiece. A former Chief Minister of Gujarat wrote: "After Gandhiji's autobiography, no book has moved me more than your autobiography. You have rendered a signal service to Gujarat in writing this book." And a noted Gujarati writer, Gulabdas Broker, said: "I would never forgive myself if I didn't write to you to tell of the joy your autobiography has given me. I consider it an outstanding gem of modern Gujarati literature."

### **ROBY D'SILVA – LEADING DESIGNER**

Nurtured in the school of extreme adversity, Roby D'Silva has worked his way, by dint of courageous and sustained struggle, to worldwide recognition and acclaim. As a designer, there is no more distinguished name in India today in the field of graphic art.

Even through the darkness of hardship and deprivation which he suffered so much in his childhood and later, there was an efflorescence of extraordinary talent. The first thrilling moment came when, out of the blue, he received a telephone call at the J.J. School of Art from a high official of the Central Government. He had won the first prize in the all India competition for a postage stamp design to commemorate the 2500<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of the Buddha. The second most notable success was in the final examination for the government diploma in commercial art. A part time student, Roby was the only one placed in the first class. He had far outstripped his class-mates including the full-time students, none having been placed even in the second class. This was only a prelude to a string of subsequent achievements. Internationally known for original work in trade marks and symbol design, Roby was awarded in 1982 a certificate of merit and a plaque by the International Biographical Centre, Cambridge, for his meritorious attainments and service to the community.

This is one among some forty national and international awards he has won during his career.

Some of D'Silva's honours and distinctions are well worth a mention. He was one of the Founder Members of the Art Directors Club of London in 1962. He was made a Fellow of the Society of Industrial Artists and Designers, U.K., in 1967, the first and only Fellow of SIAD from the orient. He was conferred Life Fellowship of the American Biographical Institute in 1984. His work in advertising art has been published and exhibited widely abroad. In London, he was the Senior Art Director and Expert in Packaging Design and Direct Mail Advertising of J. Walter Thomson, the first and only Indian to hold the post. D'Silva has also served as Art Director in the world-famous advertising firm, Studio Boggeri, in Milan, Italy.

Roby plays a quiet but effective role in raising designing standards in India. He devotes some of his time to serving on academic committees of universities like the M. S. University of Baroda, Benares Hindu University, and other centres of learning such as the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad, the Indian Institute of Technology, Powai and the J.J. School of Art, Bombay. He provides expert advice to these bodies in prescribing courses of study, serves on selection committees and periodically lectures as visiting member of their faculties. He is also a member of selection and advisory committees of the Central Government and some State Governments. D'Silva was commissioned jointly by the Advertising Agencies Association of India and the Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity, Government of India, to design and execute their Pavilion, "Tryst with Destiny," at the Asia '72 International Exhibition held in Delhi.

An Indian designer with a Western training, and a perfectionist with an amazing artistic ability, Roby D'Silva puts his expertise and experience to good use by helping



to educate a new generation of Indian designers. The goal, as he sees it, is to achieve a Western standard of quality with a distinctively Indian style which he himself has done much to evolve. Is D'Silva destined to place India on the design map of the world?

### **CHARLES CORREA – LEADING INDIAN ARCHITECT**

Charles Correa was presented with the Royal Medal for Architecture of the Royal Institute of British Architects in June, 1984. Correa is the only person from the Third World to win one of the most prestigious awards for architecture in the world. The award puts Charles Correa in the same class as internationally renowned architects like Lutyens, Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Correa's own teacher, Buckminster Fuller.

Correa's reaction was a humble one: "It's incredible! I am not in that class. I think the award reflects that the architectural issues of the Third World are much more important today than those of the West."

Considering Correa's own achievements, such a coveted award was inevitable. His architectural creations that enliven the skylines of a growing number of Indian cities speak eloquently of his professional standing. The Kasturba Gandhi Samadhi at Pune, the Electronics Corporation of India offices at Hyderabad, Bhopal's Bharat Bhavan, and the hotels he has designed in Goa and the Andamans are outstanding examples of his brilliance. It is well-known that Correa planned the New Bombay Project, an ambitious scheme to restructure the city in order to cope with its enormous inflow of population. The RIBA Award was the culmination of various forms of recognition in India and abroad

Correa's uniqueness lies in boldly innovative designs that are closely attuned to the environment and local conditions. He emphasizes utility and comfort over

external grandeur. The citation accompanying the RIBA award says:

Even his major works speak this unassuming and thoughtful language. The strength of such an approach lies in its refusal to dominate. His buildings do not celebrate power or wealth but demonstrate the virtues of an architecture dedicated to a good sense.

Deeply concerned about the role of architecture in the context of acute problems of housing in the country, Correa has urged his fellow professionals to design aesthetic, durable, low-technology, low-cost houses for the poor in India. In 1960, Correa himself won the Gujarat Housing Board's all-India competition for low-cost housing. Addressing the members of the Indian Institute of Architects, Correa said that the problem of housing the squatters and slum-dwellers in the big cities was both a challenge and an opportunity to architects. If the architects responded to the great issues of the country, they could become great people, Correa significantly observed.

### **MELVILLE DE MELLOW – BROADCASTER AND COMMENTATOR**

Melville de Mellow was the dominant personality of Indian broadcasting for 30 years ever since he joined All India Radio as a news announcer in 1940. His was the Voice of All India Radio par excellence, whether it was in newsreading, commentaries, or features. He is the only Indian broadcaster who has won wide recognition abroad. The Broadcasting Foundation of America compared him to the incomparable Norman Corwin for his sensitivity and emotional involvement in broadcasting. In 1960, he was awarded the Czechoslovak Peace Prize for Radio Documentary Writing (International). In 1970, his *Lali and the Lions of Gir* won

him the prestigious Italia Prize at the International Radio Documentary competition.

Various factors create or promote sentiments of nationalism in a people. Among these factors are the written word and the human voice. On all national occasions of significance, All India Radio mainly relied on Mr De Mellow. It was he who led the memorable commentaries on the funeral processions and cremations of the two Prime Ministers of India who died in harness – Jawaharlal Nehru and Lal Bahadur Shastri. He also has the unique record of broadcasting commentaries on the swearing-in-ceremonies of the first four Presidents of India, Dr Rajendra Prasad, Dr S. Radhakrishnan, Dr Zakir Hussein, and Dr V.V. Giri. De Mellow's most moving and unforgettable performance was his description of the last journey of the Father of the Nation thirty-six years ago. For seven and a half hours, as the lone commentator, he gave voice to the tragedy that had struck India. For its duration, his non-stop commentary, which is preserved in the B.B.C. Archives, set an unofficial world record. Reviewing the news bulletin announcing the death of Mahatma Gandhi on Friday, January 30, 1948, the National Call wrote:

Melville de Mellow's newsreading on the fateful Friday evening will go down as a landmark in the history of AIR. His modulation and rhythm were so well adapted to the needs of the script that the effect was positively spell-binding. There was not one false note in that long and dignified recital which must have moved the hearts of many. It was a great occasion and Mr De Mellow greatly rose to it.

Documentary features are Melville de Mellow's forte. His features have qualities which are both timely and timeless. They are records of abiding themes, documents in which are registered deeply felt

experiences. He has produced several features highlighting the work of United Nations agencies all over the world. Besides Lali and the Lions of Gir mentioned before, the following influential Indian features, written and produced by De Mellow, deserve a special mention: *Man of Peace* (Mahatma Gandhi), *Conquest of Everest*, *Guardians of the Sky* (Story of the Indian Air Force) and *Ganga* (Rhythms of a Civilization).

### **JULIO RIBEIRO – AN “UPRIGHT CIVIL SERVANT AND A FEARLESS COP”**

Much has been written and heard in very recent times about Julio Francis Ribeiro, till recently police Commissioner of Greater Bombay. As Bombay's Police Commissioner, Ribeiro built up a national reputation for integrity and competence. His was the first name that occurred to those in authority for the post of Commissioner of Police in Delhi to provide firm and able leadership in the wake of the carnage following Mrs Indira Gandhi's assassination. Though appointed to the post, orders were, however, revised and he was instead posted as Director General of the Central Reserve Police Force in Delhi. Mr Ribeiro who belongs to the Maharashtra cadre, originally served as Deputy Inspector General and Deputy Director of Administration in the Central Reserve Police Force. On 8 July, 1985, the Union Government appointed Mr Ribeiro Director General of Police in the ravaged state of Gujarat in its efforts to bring the extremely difficult law and order situation under control.

Ribeiro earned laurels for taming the underworld in Bombay. A significant achievement was his crackdown on organized crime and kingpins of the underworld. Ribeiro made concerted attempts to break the alliance which often existed between the underworld, the police, and the politicians. For instance, in sweeping moves, he personally spearheaded the



transfers of corrupt police officers, clearing up the ranks to make his administration's battle against crime easier. "My main consideration is to make sure the individual is protected from crime and criminals. My entire administrative effort is to this end," says Ribeiro.

Tall and of friendly disposition, Ribeiro became extremely popular during his term as Bombay's Police Commissioner by making himself available to anyone who had a complaint and by speaking to citizens' groups on the problems of maintaining law and order in a metropolis of Bombay's size. This went a long way in making the public understand the policeman's side of the picture. Perhaps Ribeiro's greatest asset is his helpfulness and his ability to maintain good human relations, particularly with those at the lower rungs of the police organisation. This won him the confidence and trust of the constabulary. A recipient of the President's police medal for distinguished service, Julio Francis Ribeiro has been described as the "best thing that could happen to the Indian police force, being practical, systematic, optimistic, upright, and honest and a no-nonsense officer."

### **ALOYSIUS SOARES (1891-1971)—SCHOLAR, WRITER, AND EDUCATIONALIST**

Eminent scholar, writer and educationist, Aloysius Soares was also a Municipal Corporator and Syndic and Fellow of the University of Bombay. Knighted by the Pope, Soares was in the vanguard of Christian movements of his time. He played a leading role in giving an effective reply to the Niyogi Commission in a book, Truth Shall Prevail, which he edited and co-authored with other eminent Christian scholars and educationists: G. X. Francis, William Coelho, M. Ruthnaswamy, M.F. Colaco, M. Arokiaswami, C.D. Pinto and M. Hermanns, S.V.D.

Editor of *The Goan Tribune* for several years, Aloysius Soares played a creditable role as President of the Goa Liberation Council. The story of his event-filled life is narrated in his delightful and informative two-volume autobiography entitled *Down the Corridors of Time*.

### **ARMANDO MENEZES (1902-1983) – OUTSTANDING EDUCATIONALIST**

Among the well-known names in the area of education, one can certainly include Professor Armando Menezes, Winner of the Ellis Prize at the Bombay University B.A. Examination and the Chancellor's Gold Medal at the M.A. Renowned for his scholarship both English and in Latin, Prof. Menezes was, during the 40's and the 50's, a leading poet and literary writer in the country. His collection of poems "Chords and Dischords," "Chaos - The Dancing Star," and "The Ancestral Face" received rave reviews both in India and abroad and his poems are included in anthologies even today. He was Principal of Karnatak College, Dharwar, Rajaram College, Kolhapur, and posthumously received, together with R.K. Laxman, a State Award from the Karnataka Government for his services to education. For his invaluable contribution to the education of priests and nuns who studied at Karnatak University, he was decorated with a Papal Knighthood.

### **CHERIAN MALIAKAL – EDUCATIONIST AND SOCIAL WORKER**

Cherian Maliakal Eapen President, Spicer Memorial College, Pune, since 1963 and educationalist, social worker, and prominent All-India Christian leader, was born in 1926 in Kerala. He received his bachelor's degree from Spicer Memorial College in 1949 and obtained a M.A. degree in Religious Philosophy ( Andrews University, Michigan, 1953); and another M.A. in History ( University of Maryland, 1956); and, a Ph.D. degree in

Politics ( University of Poona, 1966). Currently he is the President of the All-India Christian Association, and CARAVS (Christian Association of Radio and Visual Aids Services); he also serves on the National Board of the Y.M.C.A. of India and is President of the local YMCA in Pune.

Best known for his contribution as an educational innovator, in his 23-year Presidency Cherian has played a major role in the development of Spicer Memorial College with its distinctive philosophy of education. He advocates a total education as a dynamic instrument for building up society and has sought to make it relevant to the needs of the country.

Significant aspects which have impacted educational institutions throughout the State due to his efforts have been the involvement of students in work programmes and leadership roles. As a nominee of the Chancellor to the Pune University Senate he has contributed to the restructuring of the University educational programme. He has lectured in several universities in India and abroad. His participation in the educational enterprise extends beyond Spicer Memorial College. He serves as the Chairman of the B.P.H.E.S. Ahmednagar College Board, and as a leading member on the governing councils of several educational, social, and cultural bodies.

In recognition of his outstanding services to the cause of learning and to humanity, Cherian was chosen as an Alumnus of Distinction in the Hall of Fame at Andrews University in 1975, and was awarded an honorary LLD in 1980.

He also received a citation from the Michigan State Government on the occasion of the Michigan International Week in October 1975, alongwith 37 other

distinguished educationalists, who graduated from Michigan centres of higher learning to return to their native countries where they have made significant contributions to learning and society.

A democratic socialist, Cherian's socio-political concerns include national integration, social justice, freedom, and temperance. His services to the local community have seen him elected as President of the Rotary and appointed as special Executive Magistrate. On the national front as a student, he actively participated in India's freedom movement, and has more recently been active on the political scene in Pune and Maharashtra. Acknowledged as a voice for the rights and privileges of minorities, he played a prominent role in opposing the Freedom of Religion Bill. Theologian-philosopher, and an ordained minister of his Church, Maliakal Eapen Cherian is perhaps the best known Seventh-Day Adventist in India.

### **HENRY D'PENHA – JOURNALIST AND CIVIL SERVANT**

After four years of legal practice as an advocate of the Bombay High Court, Mr Henry D'Penha took to journalism. During this period, he took part in politics and was one of the two Vice-Presidents of the Nationalist Christian Party affiliated to the Indian National Congress, from 1939-43, the other being the late Mrs. Violet Alva. In 1948, he joined the Government of India as Information Officer, Press Information Bureau and in 1951 was posted to the Indian Embassy in Tokyo as First Secretary (Information). During this period he was also Chairman of the Commonwealth Cultural Relations Committee in Tokyo.

In 1954, he became Deputy Principal Information Officer. In December 1961, he was Chief Press Officer



before the Goa Operation and later became Press Advisor to the Military Governor, and then Secretary, Information and Tourism Department, Goa. From 1962-64, he was the Deputy Principal Information Officer attached to the Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru.

In July, 1965, Mr D'Penha was deputed to Indian Airlines as Public Relations Manager, and served till 1970. During this period, he was the Indian Airlines delegate to the IATA Public Relations Conferences at Montreal (1966), Rio de Janeiro (1968) and Kyoto (1970). He was also the Founder-President of the IATA Public Relations Panel for Asia and the South Pacific. In 1970, he became Director of Advertising and Visual Publicity, Government of India. In 1971, he took over as Principal Information Officer, Government of India, and organized the logistics and publicity for coverage of Bangladesh refugees and later of the Indo-Pakistan War of December 1971. In July 1975, he was recalled after retirement to take over a Chief Censor to the Government of India with the rank of Additional Secretary. From 1977, he functioned as Chief Press Adviser to the Government of India.

### **FABIAN FERNANDES – EDUCATIONIST**

A Member of the Bombay University Senate, Executive Council and Academic Council for over twenty years, Dr Fabian Fernandes was also Dean of the Faculty of Science and Acting Vice-Chancellor of the University of Bombay.

A post-graduate teacher of Microbiology, Dr Fernandes has made a significant contribution in this field. The prestigious positions held by Dr Fernandes include President of the Association of Microbiology of India, Head of the Microbiology Research Division of Ciba Geigy, and Assistant Secretary General of the

International Association of Micro-biologists. He was Chairman of the Organizing Committee for the International Congress of Microbiology in Bombay in 1969 and Member of its world advisory body for over 20 years, Member of the United Nations Panel of Microbiology for over 12 years and the President of the International Congress of Microbiology held in Bombay in 1976. Dr Fernandes was the Recipient of the highest International Cell Research Organization Award (UNESCO/ICRO Award) for an outstanding career in teaching and research in Microbiology.

### **JOHN FERREIRA – HIGH RANKING SOCIOLOGIST**

Dr J.V. Ferreira secured his doctorate from the University of Vienna in Cultural Anthropology and Pre-Historic Archeology. A former Editor of K.M. Munshi's *Social Welfare Weekly*, he was Professor and Head of the Department of Sociology, and a Member of the Executive Council and Senate of the University of Bombay. He has served as Honorary Director of the Western Regional Centre of the Indian Council of Social Science Research and as Chairman of the Coordinating Committee of the East African and U.S.S.R. Area Studies Centre of the Bombay University. Recently he was appointed Chairman of a Government of Maharashtra Committee on the Halba/Halba Koshti Problem. He is Hon. Professor at the G.D. Parikh Centre for Educational Studies and the Institute of Indian Culture, Bombay.

Dr Ferreira's wide-ranging scholarly contributions include Totemism in India, Essays in Ethnology, The Outlook Tower: Essays on Urbanization in Memory of Patrick Geddes, Nemesis: Critical Perspectives on Modernisation and Survey of Research in Sociology and Social Anthropology in India (3 Volumes).

**GEORGE MENEZES – COLUMNIST**

An accomplished leader, a freelance columnist for leading national dailies and a noted writer of humour, George Menezes, Personal Director of Hoechst India Ltd., is a household name among the literate public of the country today. Through his varied activities, he has played an influential role in national life in general and in the Christian community in particular. As a behavioural scientist, he is on the faculty of some of the most prestigious training institutes in the country and has conducted numerous training programmes for Christian leaders, bishops, priests, nuns, and teachers of schools and colleges.

A social and political activist and a gifted public speaker, his leadership of the Christian Community on occasions involving infringement of minority rights, led to his appointment as a member of the Pontifical Council for the Laity. He is a member of the Bombay University Board of Studies for Social Work, the National Advisory Council of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, the Indian Society for Training and Development, the Indian Institute of Personnel Management and several other organizations. He has been one of the moving spirits behind the formation of The Society for Protection of Fundamental Rights and the All India Christian Forum. George Menezes has done much in the area of employment, career guidance, and counselling.

**MARIO MIRANDA – FAMOUS CARTOONIST**

An extremely gifted and well-known freelance cartoonist, Mario Miranda has earned even international recognition for his work. Mario went to London in 1959, made "sketching" trips to various countries in Europe and was awarded a Gulbenkian Scholarship in 1960. He

visited the U.S.A. in 1974 at the invitation of the American Government which exhibited his "Impressions of the U.S.A." all over India in 1975. His drawings on India were exhibited in the Federal Republic of Germany in 1977. In the same year Mario visited West Germany at the invitation of the Government. He portrayed his impressions of people and places there in a collection of drawings which were exhibited by the seven Max Mueller Bhavans in India. His work has been exhibited in Bombay, London, West Germany, USA, and Belgium. Mario has also provided the illustrations in many books for children. His delightful publications are Goa with Love, Sketchbook; Laugh it Off; A Little World of Humour; Are you Ready, Miss Fonesca? and Germany in Wintertime.

### **DENNYSON PEREIRA**

With specialist training in the USA in the fields of Management and Organizational Development and Communication, Dr Dennyson F. Pereira secured a doctorate in Psychology in the area of Organization. For several years, Dr Pereira has been a Visiting Professor at the Indian Institute of Management and is currently the faculty leader of the programmes conducted by the All India Management Association, the National Productivity Council, the Bombay Management Association and the Bombay Productivity Council.

He has also been a Guest Faculty at the Indian Institute for Defence Management, State Bank of India Staff College, Income Tax Staff College, Maharashtra Administrative Staff College, and is on the Faculty of Bhavan's S.P. Jain Institute of Management, and on the Board of Studies in Psychology, University of Bombay. He was specially invited to participate in the First Conference of Military Psychology in 1961.



Dr Pereira has done extensive work in Psychological Testing and Vocational Guidance in the Government's Vocational Guidance Bureau, Bombay. He has served as Clinical Psychologist and Senior Lecturer in M.S. University of Baroda, Faculty of Social Works Clinic at Sayaji General Hospital and as Personnel Manager, Sarabhai Chemicals. In 1966, he joined Larsen and Toubro Limited, where he is presently the Deputy General Manager, Human Resources Development – a relatively new area of interest and importance in India in which he has played a major role and made a valuable contribution.

### **ROGER PEREIRA**

President and Chief Executive Officer, Shilpi Advertising Limited, Mr Roger Pereira is Director, International Advertising Association, New York, Promoter, Code for Self-Regulation in Advertising in India and Trustee, Namedia Foundation, - an organization of and for the media of the Non-Aligned Nations. He was a former Chairman of the International Advertising Association, India Chapter, and a former President of the Advertising Club, Bombay, and the Advertising Agencies Association of India. He is the winner of several awards including the International Advertising Association Award in 1964 and in 1967.

His agency, Shilpi, with which he has been associated for more than two decades, has won more national and international awards than any other advertising agency in India. The most prestigious of these was the Max Lewis Trophy for the Best Public Service Campaign in Asia and Australia for the National Association for the Blind. Mr Pereira has assisted the Government of India on Communications Programmes for Family Planning and Cereal Substitution and was an

Adviser to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. He is presently working on the Family Planning Campaign for the Government of Maharashtra, Maharashtra Pollution Control and "Be for Bombay Campaign" for the Bombay Municipal Corporation.

### **CHICOT VAZ**

Among the leading neurologists in the country today is Dr Chicot Vaz, Head of the Department of Neurology, Nanavati Hospital, and Visiting Neurologist at the Jerbai Wadia Hospital for Children, Bombay. Dr Vaz was the Chairman of the Organizing Committee of the 14<sup>th</sup> FIAMC (International Catholic Federation of Catholic Medical Associations) World Congress held in Bombay in 1978. He is a Member of the Pontifical Council for "Cor Unum," a Papal Council for the Study of Human Development and Charity. He is the Vice-President of the International Commission of Health Professionals for Health and Human Rights, Geneva, and the first Indian to be President of the International Federation of Catholic Medical Guilds. Dr Vaz has made a significant contribution to the study and development of Medical Ethics in India and abroad. Knighted by Pope Paul VI in 1978, Dr Vaz is the Founder of the FIAMC Bio-Medical Ethics Centre, Bombay, the first of its kind in Asia.

We have made a general survey of the substantial contributions of some individual Christians to national life over a wide range of endeavour including such areas as indology and indigenisation, education and medicine, botany and science, language and literature, economics and development, history and archaeology, music, art and architecture, journalism and broadcasting, public life, and patriotism.

In this preliminary section on the Christian contribution to the advancement of Indian thought,

culture and national life in general, a final word remains to be said about the important role played by specific Christian institutes and publications in this regard.

Of the several research-oriented Christian institutes of repute, devoted entirely or in part, to a study of Indian society and culture, mention should be made of the Indian Social Institute, Delhi, the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, Bangalore, and the Institute of Indian Culture, Bombay. It is noteworthy that the Indian Social Institute, Delhi, is consulted by the Government of India on social questions.

Among the several scholarly Christian periodicals, devoted exclusively or in part, to a study or examination of social and national issues, mention should be made of the quarterly Social Action, Delhi, the monthlies Religion and Society and National Christian Council Review, published in Bangalore and Nagpur respectively, and the influential Bombay weekly, The Examiner.

## **Chapter - V**

### **CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION TO**

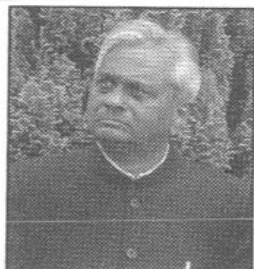
### **DALIT LIBERATION**

- Conversion as the best, simplest, surest & the most non-violent way to liberate Dalits -**

**T**he Untouchables (Dalits) are the single largest chunk forming 20% of India's 1,000-million population. History has proved they are the original inhabitants of India and also builders of its great glorious Indus Valley Civilization.

#### **Downfall of India:**

The invasion of alien Aryans brought their first downfall which was corrected by the Buddha through his powerful socio-spiritual revolution. The entire lot of Dalits and other victims of Brahminism (today called Hinduism) embraced Buddhism which assured them liberation. Buddhism reigned over India for over 1,000 years which is described in history books as the "Golden Age of India."



***Mr V.T. Rajshekar***

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A dwarf Brahmin from Kerala, Adi Shankara, took over the task of reviving Brahminism by destroying Buddhism, physically annihilating Buddhists and their monks, and converting Buddhist viharas into Hindu temples. After a prolonged bloody war and violence, the Brahminical religion was revived by manufacturing two Epics - the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* – and then a scripture called the *Bhagawad Gita*. The caste system was evolved, codified, and strictly enforced through the *Manu Dharma Shashtra* and non-violence (ahimsa) was borrowed from Jainism and incorporated into Hinduism. Brahmins were directed to abstain from meat-eating and become vegetarians. And others were directed to refrain from eating beef and cow was declared a sacred animal (*gomata*) and next only to mother. These were the tricks adopted by Brahmins to destroy Buddhism and re-establish the world's most violent religion of inequality, injustice, and inhumanity. All these form part of the history written by Brahmin historians themselves.

This is the beginning of the downfall of India and the wave of foreign invasions. Even the “independence” of India (1947) did not bring relief to the oppressed sections. The Scheduled Castes (20%), Scheduled Tribes (10%) and Backward Castes (35%) – a total of 65% of India's population - are today facing serious social, political, economic, and religious crisis.

### **India as a Failed State**

To this long list of the persecuted nationalities denied human rights, we have to add the Muslims (15%), Christians (2.5%) and Sikhs (2.5%) – a total of 20%. Even the women of upper castes have been made a deprived lot.

A total of 85% of our population is today facing gloom and doom. Every part of India, every section of India, every community of India is facing unprecedented crises

– political, economic, social, cultural and religious. Law and order have collapsed. Corruption is sky-high. All the three pillars of the state – executive, legislature, and judiciary – have broken down. The Fourth Estate – the media to which I belong – is in shambles. Several state governments have no money to pay salaries to their own staff. While China, which became independent two years after India, has assured food, clothing, shelter and even health and education to all its 1,300 million people, India has failed in the very first one – food. But the 15% upper castes (Hindus) have become rulers of the land by exploiting the rest of the population. (V.T. Rajshekar: *India as a Failed State*, Dalit Sahitya Academy – 2004).

### **Vanguard of the Revolution**

Why has India become a failed state? This is because the new rulers (Hindus) have failed to look after the just needs of its 85% population, particularly the Dalits who are at the bottom of the society.

A country is like the chain of a cycle. The cycle can move smoothly only if every link in the chain is in perfect condition. In the Indian cycle chain, only about 15% of the links are well-oiled and well-maintained. The rest of the links are rusted, decaying. That is why the cycle is not moving. It is as simple as that.

The first people who revolted against this Hindu bid to destroy India are the Dalits who are carrying the weight of this entire oppressive Hindu society. Of all the people, why are the Dalits alone in the forefront of the revolution? There are two reasons for it:

- 1) The Dalits are at the bottom of this social pyramid and hence the worst sufferers.
- 2) Besides, they are the original inhabitants of India and, hence, its owners.

That is why the Dalits form the vanguard of the revolution to bring about a transformation in the society. Dalits alone can save India. No other section has that much of an urge to save India.

### **Buddhist Perception of Christianity**

Though I am a Buddhist since many years, I have not been a practising Buddhist. We find no major contradiction between Buddhism and Christianity in India. At least, not to our knowledge. *Dalit Voice*, of which I am the Editor, has readership all over India. So far no Buddhist has complained to us against the Christians. Buddhists are fighting mainly the Brahminical (upper caste) people. In Maharashtra, where the largest number of Buddhists live, our people do not face any problem from Christians. In fact, the Christians are fully with us.

Our No.1 Enemy is Brahminism which today goes by the name of Hinduism. Though the upper caste rulers of India, including their leader M.K. Gandhi, declared Buddhism as part of Hinduism and made Buddha an avatar (incarnation), they refused to extend constitutional reservations to Dalit converts to Buddhism. It was Prime Minister V.P. Singh in 1991 who removed this restriction. The Hindus are doing their best to Hinduize (enslave) the Buddhists. A big debate is going on in *Dalit Voice* on this subject and we are soon calling a meeting of concerned Buddhists at Nagpur to discuss steps to fight this Hindu menace.

### **Role of Conversion**

The social and religious aspirations of the Dalits are not only to liberate themselves but through that to save India itself. According to Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar, the Father of India, who conducted a series of experiments in this field, this is possible only through religious conversion. (Dr B.R. Ambedkar: *Why Go For Conversion?* Dalit Sahitya Academy, reprinted 1987).

Religious conversion is the best, the simplest, the most inexpensive and also the most non-violent way of not only liberating the Dalits but the country as a whole. It is as simple as that.

The uppercastes (Hindus) give equal treatment to Christians, Muslims, and Sikhs. People belonging to these three sections (called religious minorities) did not come from outside India. Christians of India did not come from Rome, and Muslims did not come from Arabia. They are converts from today's SC/ST/BCs. They achieved equality and self-respect only through conversion. When 20% of India (Muslim, Christian, and Sikh) could achieve equality and self-respect through such a simple social engineering (conversion), why not the rest of the SC/ST/BCs follow this simple path?

### **Never-ending Caste War**

Such a conversion will bring happiness to both SC/ST/BCs as well as their oppressors (Hindus). As long as Dalits remain within the Hindu fold, they have to fight with Hindus daily. See what happened in Jhajjar (Haryana) recently. It is a daily fight in the countryside today. India is full of caste wars between the Hindus and Dalits. Conversion will once for all end this war and violence and there will be peace in the countryside and India as a whole.

The Hindus may ask: When there is caste inside the religions of Muslim, Christian, and Sikhs, why again go into such a leaking house? This is a mischievous question. There is a great deal of difference between the Hindu caste system and the castes within other religions. Caste is not the chief characteristic of these religions. But the Hindu caste system has the religious sanction. Even M.K.Gandhi, the father of the Hindu nation, defended the caste system because it had the blessings of Hindu religion. That is why no Dalit has been



made a Shankarachari to this day. But several Dalits have become Bishops, Imams, and Sikh Saints. They can destroy their castes without destroying their religions. However, if you destroy the caste system, Hinduism itself is dead. This is because the caste system is the other name for Hinduism. Kill caste, Hinduism is dead.

### ***Gandhi hated Christians.***

We have found Christian and church leaders praising Gandhi and some priests even imitating Gandhi. Such ignorant Christian leaders do not know the real face of Gandhi. They have not read what Gandhi had said about the church and its glorious services to the oppressed – a service which can be written only in the letters of gold. We call upon such church leaders to read Gandhi's own book published by his publishing house. (Christian Missions – Their Place in India, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad- 14, 1941, edited by Bharatan Kumarappa).

In this book at several places Gandhi asks the Christian missionaries "not to entice the Harijans" (p. 52) and warns.

"Those who are engaged in the competition are not serving the cause of religion," (p. 52)

He is angry with the church because it is liberating the Dalits from Hindu slavery and racism.

### **Enemy No.1 of Untouchables**

The most important is Gandhi's speech at the famous United Theological College, Bangalore, which he visited sometime in 1927, long before "independence," when the college had mostly Western missionaries of repute. The speech he delivered there clearly proved that Gandhi was totally against conversion of Untouchables. Because Gandhi knew that his Hinduism, which was a goldmine for the upper castes

(Hindus), would be reduced to a minority and naturally die if the Untouchables quit that religion. He warned the missionaries that:

"While I am strengthening the faith of the people, you (meaning missionaries) are undermining it" (ibid p.101). He asked the church to make the Harijans "better Hindus, as they belong to Hinduism".(ibid p. 103).

However, Dr B.R. Ambedkar, the Saviour of Dalits, has declared that "Untouchables are not Hindu and were never Hindu."

Every word that Gandhi uttered proved that he was a hard-core Sanatani Hindu and that was why Dr Ambedkar called him the Enemy No.1 of Untouchables. The church leaders will agree with this assessment if only they read this book which is a devastating criticism of the Christian services to humanity.

The conversion of Untouchables may weaken Hinduism but it will certainly strengthen the country. However, to Gandhi and his jatwalas, who being Aryans and hence aliens, their religion is more important than the country. Who is anti-national, the Christian Church must decide.

### **The Kerala example**

Islam, Christianity, and Sikhism have become powerful religions and the people following it have also become powerful because of their egalitarian values. So, if Dalits also quit Hinduism and embrace these egalitarian religions not only they will get social harmony but thereby they also become powerful. India also can secure peace and through peace it can become powerful. Look at the neighbouring Kerala where 25% of its population is today Muslim and another 25% Christian. Kerala is a literate, clean, disciplined, and progressive state because of the leading role played by

these two egalitarian religions. Similarly, the North-Eastern states have become fully literate, powerful, and revolutionary because the entire Mangoloid Tribals got converted to Christianity. Sikhism transformed the whole of Punjab. This is the miracle of religious conversion. Therefore, those who argue against conversion are not only the enemies of Dalits but the enemies of India itself.

Ever since India became "independent"(1947), we did not have any social harmony. After the advent of the Bharatiya Janata Party, a pure Brahminical outfit, social harmony is totally dead. The Gujarat Genocide of Muslims (2002) presents the best example. Caste system is killing the country. The Hindus themselves are fighting within themselves. If conversion can end all this problem in one stroke, why are the Hindus opposing it?

### **Top secret of India**

The reason is simple but it is kept a top secret. Brahminism, which has lately taken the new name of Hinduism, has become the "majority religion" by annexing Dalits (20%), Tribals (10%) and the Backward Castes (35%). "Untouchables," said Dr Ambedkar, "are not Hindu and were never Hindu." Hinduism, or Brahminism, is an Aryan import. This is true of Tribals and BCs also. The reason why the Hindus hate all the three is because the SC/ST/BCs are not Aryan but original inhabitants. By annexing this 65% non-Hindu population, the 15% minority Hindus suddenly became a majority religion and thereby rulers.

Conversion reduces the number of their slaves. And once the Hindu population – now put at 85% - is reduced, the Hindus become a minority. Conversion thus has a double – disadvantage to the Hindu:

(1) The Hindu will lose his free, permanent, obedient slaves. (2) The Hindu will cease to be the ruler because he is reduced to a minority.

That is why the Hindu is shouting and crying – not because of any love for the Harijan but out of pure self-interest. That is why the Presidential Order of 1950 was brought to confine the SC/ST/BC slaves to the Hindu prison house. The state itself was used to promote Hinduism. Even our Hindu judiciary did not question this Presidential Order.

### **Role of Christians**

A Brahmin Chief Minister Jayalalita brought a new law in Tamil Nadu with the same reason to see that the Hindu edifice does not crumble and become a minority religion. But none of these legislations or state-sponsored tyranny can stop the oppressed people from seeking social justice. That work is going on – silently but steadily.

The leadership of Muslims, Christians, and Sikhs can speed up this process of social justice through conversion. Islam does not have a machinery for conversion. Christians have their powerful evangelical wing. But after the foreign missionaries left India, the work in this direction has slowed down, if not almost stopped. This is because the upper caste Christians captured the church leadership and did not want to hurt their cousins in the Hindu ruling class. Had the church leadership launched a powerful struggle, the Govt of India would have been forced to withdraw the 1950 Presidential Order.

### **Dalits betrayed**

The church leadership betrayed the Dalits who would have simply flocked into Christianity (at least in South India) had the Presidential Order been withdrawn. The church leadership, both Protestant and Catholic, did not look at the Dalit issue beyond its selfish interest – that is, beyond conversion.



The church is not interested in liberating the Dalits as a whole. The persecution, daily struggle, the rampant racism in the countryside, young Dalit girls becoming prostitutes, their hunger, unemployment, murder and mayhem – their struggle for social justice – does not interest the church. What type of a church is this?

The Dalits, the worst persecuted section, today are in a very bad shape - totally impoverished. We are not referring to the SC/ST people enjoying the reserved jobs. They form just 2-3% of the Dalit population. The village-dwelling, illiterate Dalits are on starvation diet. Poverty and deprivation are not giving them even a chance to think. A revolution is preceded by a revolutionary situation. Such a revolutionary situation is not existing in any part of India. A hungry man cannot be a revolutionary. So, an organised religion like Christianity has the ability to create a revolutionary situation among Dalits by supporting their socio-economic needs and then by awakening them. As the Bible says:

“Know the Truth and Truth shall make you free.”

### **Change in Church Attitude**

Did the church tell the Truth? Did the church **identify** the enemy? The poor, innocent Dalits do not know who is their Enemy, and who is their friend. Once they come to know this Truth, they will simply explode. Why has the church failed in its most important duty towards the oppressed?

The upper caste church leadership is not taking interest in such a work. Had this leadership taken liberation of the Dalits as the sole objective of the church, the non-Christian Dalits would not have opposed the Dalit Christian reservation issue.

Lately, we find some change in the attitude of the church leadership. The church offered full support to

the Dalit case before the United Nations Conference at Durban which sought to equate India's casteism with racism. India's upper caste-led govt vehemently opposed our demand and defeated us at Durban, though for the first time the world was shocked to hear about the horrible Hindu Apartheid system prevailing in India. After Durban, we find a welcome change in the attitude of the Church.

### **Dalit Liberation Theology**

On behalf of the Dalits of India, we want to tell the Church authorities that if they put the full might of the Church behind the Dalits, it is possible to bring about big socio-cultural changes in the country. For this, the Church must take to a new Dalit Liberation Theology and make it the principal mission of the Church.

In this new mission proposed for the Church, it has to take some precautions. No political party, not even a Dalit political party, will take interest in the social and religious liberation of Dalits because that will effect their votes. That is why no party is taking a stand on this issue. Nor will the educated Dalit employees like it (of course, with minor exceptions). This is because, having taken advantage of reservations, they have been corrupted and co-opted by the ruling Brahminical Social Order. The Church has to conduct its social engineering experiment with the village-level grassroot Dalit organizations which still remain uncontaminated and hence revolutionary.

### **Dalit Christians**

The Church can embrace the Dalits only if it gets the full cooperation from its own Dalit Christians who form over 60% of the Christian population. Unfortunately, the Dalit Christians are angry with the Church. When the upper castes within the Church are not treating their own Dalit Christian brothers as equals, how will the Dalits outside develop a trust in the Church?

There is a good lot of mistrust between the Dalit Christians and Dalits. This can be removed if the Church gives a prime place to Dr Ambedkar's revolutionary thoughts and accords a prime place to the "Father of India." It can also seek the cooperation of Muslims in this task.

India's second independence struggle for social and religious liberation is possible only if the Dalits are at the forefront of this movement. The Dalits are willing. They are impatiently waiting. Church – being the most well-organized, cadre-based organization with millions of its dedicated sisters working in every corner of India - is ideally cut out to act as the catalyst for such a revolution.

Is the church ready?

**Further reading:**

1) Why Go For Conversion?

Dr B. R. Ambedkar's historic speech delivered in 1936, published by the Dalit Sahitya Academy under the title, *Why Go For Conversion?* With a foreword by V.T. Rajshekar. (DSA third reprint, 1987 pp.30).

2) Religious Conversion

Chapter no.12 of the book, *Weapons to Fight Counter Revolution*, V. T. Rajshekar, Dalit Sahitya Academy, 2004. pp. 100.

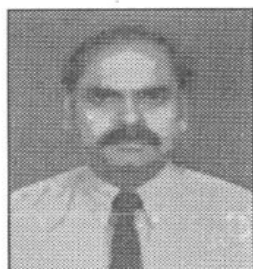
3) The Un-Christian Side of the Indian Church - The plight of the Untouchable Converts.

The Rt Rev. M. Azariah (former Bishop of Madras, CSI), Dalit Sahitya Academy, 1989.

## Chapter - VI

### CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AMONG THE DALITS AND THE BACKWARD COMMUNITIES

India, the world's largest functioning democracy became an independent country from Britain in 1947. During the past few decades Hindu extreme nationalist movements such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) have grown in strength and influence with their fascist nationalist Hindutva ideology, and with powerful populist propaganda have penetrated most of the power structures. Upon this power, the Hindu nationalist Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) has gained political supremacy to rule the country for sometime. At present for the most part Hindutva activists – the RSS propagandists are directing the state governments though they lost the election to rule from the centre. This



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very situation undermines the ethos of the pluralistic society, the bedrock of any democratic structure.

Against this backdrop this chapter deals with the relationship between nationalism, democracy and common people, the Dalits, tribals and other minorities. The essay is divided into two sections: the first deals with nationalism while the second is about democracy. This chapter will examine the Christian contribution to development of the consciousness of nationalism and democracy which is significantly an important issue for understanding the role of the marginalized communities in the Republic of India

### **Nationalism**

During the European Renaissance nationalism emerged as a revolutionary movement which tried to transform or overthrow imperial authority whose right to power was based on hereditary/supernatural claims.<sup>1</sup> Modern nationalisms are a 19<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon which is an inevitable outcome of capitalism and industrialization.<sup>2</sup> H.Kohn has defined contemporary nationalism in the following terms.

Nationalisms are of very recent origin and of the utmost complexity. They defy exact definition, are not absolute and have no objective apriori. Nationalism is a political creed that underlays the cohesion of modern societies and legitimises their claim to authority.<sup>3</sup>

In India, since the 19<sup>th</sup> century a variety of nationalisms emerged, particularly in the context of its interaction with the ideologies of British Raj in general and Christianity in particular. According to Vincent Kumaradoss, nationalism cannot merely be "endowed with a monolithic, anti-colonial content" and there can be "multiple histories of nationalism and colonialism" depending on the specific context. However "in the nationalist discourse the concept of 'nation' and

'nationalism' are invested with an aura of utmost sacredness endowing nationalism with a monolithic anti-colonial and anti-Christian content".<sup>4</sup>

Not only in India but also in other Two-Third-world countries nationalism emerged in the context of British rule. As we have noted in the previous chapters, the 'initiators' of the modernization process in these countries particularly in India were the colonizers – the British themselves who provided much of the infrastructure for the emergence of nationalism(s) of various types both cultural and ethnic.<sup>5</sup> The modern Hindu nationalists' pride was invented to counter (Christian)<sup>6</sup> Western accusation of Brahminical Hinduism as irrational religion and Brahminical caste Hindus as inferior people.

The Hindu nationalists claimed that the irrational elements of Hinduism, such as caste, child marriage, sati, etc were later additions to Hinduism and the true Hinduism of the past was free from such practices and was indeed rational.<sup>7</sup> They sought to revitalize, regenerate as well as reinvent the so-called Hindu *sanantan* culture ('abiding' primordial civilization) as a way of re-establishing Hindu Brahminical imperialism so as to suppress other religious minorities such as Muslims and Christians. But they achieved it in the name of 'resisting colonialism' and now they do it in the name of opposing westernization and globalization.

The cultural nationalists glorified the ancient past and developed several myths for their own selfish advantage. Three of them are noteworthy:

First of these myths is the belief that Indian society reached a high water -mark the golden age, in ancient India, from which it gradually slid downwards during the medieval period, the period of decay and foreign rule and continued to slide downwards till the revivalist movements made partial recovery but that the real task

of reviving the past glory and civilization still remains. The second myth arose out of the necessity to prove that India of ancient past - the golden age had made the highest achievements in human civilization. But this was not obviously true in material civilization, cranks who talk of atomic bombs and aero planes in ancient India notwithstanding. Therefore the myth that Indian genius lay in 'spiritualism' in which respect it was superior to the materialistic West. The third was the Aryan myth, which was a copy of the Anglo-Saxon myths, (*but it was originally invented by two Brahmins namely Manu and Kaudillya*) and it was the Indian response to the white racialists' doctrines. This was the myth that Indian people were Aryans and that the pure Indian culture and society were those of Aryan, Vedic period.<sup>8</sup>

This sort of cultural nationalism became a precursor to the later development of Hindu ethnic nationalism led by Sarvakar,<sup>9</sup> Hegdewar and Golwalkar.<sup>10</sup> While the Hindu view highlighted the glory of the ancient past, it ignored at the same time the rich heritage of other people groups, the Dravidians, Tribals etc, which now resulted in the hatred of minorities.<sup>11</sup>

On the other hand during the 19<sup>th</sup> century apart from the European intellectual currents such as Enlightenment and Liberalism, the Judeo Christian ideals (liberty, equality and fraternity) that came via missionary activities contributed towards emergence of Indian nationalism, democracy and self-rule especially among the Christians.<sup>12</sup> For instance a number of recent historical studies show that missionary run Christian schools prepared Indians for self-rule. Vincent Kumara Doss contends that in South India the education that missionaries provided actually promoted the elements of political consciousness.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Christians belonging to backward classes (BCs) were involved in the emerging national politics.<sup>14</sup>

G.A.Oddie's study dealing with *Indian Christians and the National Congress 1885-1910* concludes that Indian Christians were active in national politics. In its early years, Indian Christians passionately backed the National Congress and attended its annual meetings.<sup>15</sup> It is to be remembered that it was a Christian by name Allan Octavian Hume who founded the Indian National Congress, the major opposition party to the British Raj in the pre-independent India. K.C.Banerji, Peter Paul Pillai, Pandita Ramabai, the well-known Christian social reformer, and Mesdames Trimbuck and Nikambe and many other Christian men and women were staunch members of the Congress party in the following years.

Arthur Jeyakumar's doctoral research on *Christians and the National Movement* reveals a great deal about the Indian Christian participation in the National Movement. He writes that,

When the non-co-operation movement started in 1920, there were Indian Christians in the whole of India who took part in it. We do not have clear-cut statistics to show the extent of Indian Christian participation, but the number of sympathetic Indian Christians towards the National Movement could not have been insignificant. ...<sup>16</sup>

However, the Christian converts were a small minority and they were predominantly drawn from the poor and the oppressed lower caste groups who were once victims of caste-based oppression in the indigenous Brahminical Hindu social order. By 'quitting' the oppressive religion and converting to the gospel of Christ, they crossed the pollution line and became dignified people. For such a socially backward community it took some time to prepare themselves for voluntary public involvement.<sup>17</sup> Yet there emerged influential group of persons particularly among the formerly depressed class



communities who actively participated in the national politics.<sup>18</sup> Daniel Thomas was one such person produced by Tirunelveli Anglican Christianity. He became a Member of Legislative Council (MLC) of the Madras State. In the year 1931 while speaking on the 'Indian Christian and Citizenship', as a Christian politician he maintained that:

The fact that the Indian Christians were a minority was all the more reason why they should realize that they had greater obligation to the State than others. Simply because they had embraced the Christian religion had their interests also become separate from the rest of their Indian brethren? Not at all. Their Christian faith far from weakening their responsibilities as citizens, ought to enhance their sense of duty to the State. The efforts of the Indian Christians, who profess to be followers of Christ, who went about doing good, should be to uplift India as a whole and to heal differences wherever they existed at the present day.<sup>19</sup>

The convictions cherished by Daniel Thomas formerly a member of an untouchable Shanar community are noteworthy.<sup>20</sup>

An illustrious example is V.S. Azariah, the first Indian Anglican Bishop (an ex-untouchable) and a contemporary of M.K. Gandhi.<sup>21</sup> Bishop Azariah has been considered as one of the invisible builders of the Republic of India, the world's largest democracy. In 1945 while the British Raj was contemplating to appoint an Indian Viceroy, it was mentioned about Azariah that, "the only Indian who could possibly carry the job of Viceroy is the Bishop of Dornakal, but the Government would never have the sense to appoint him".<sup>22</sup>

While the cultural nationalists understood nationalism in terms of negative and quasi religious, the native Christians understood nationalism in terms of loyalty and patriotism. For Christians, nationalism is consistent with Christian loyalty to God alone and submission to the lordship of Christ.<sup>23</sup> Where Christians live in a democracy, they share with all citizens the privilege of political power, and therefore have the greater responsibility to ensure that justice characterizes it.<sup>24</sup> A basic guide for any Christian conduct in any sphere is the greatest commandment (both Old and New Testaments) to love God totally and to love the neighbour as oneself (Matt 23:37). A Christian nationalist would seek the welfare of the people like prophet Jeremiah, but such a person may be branded as a traitor like Jeremiah because he resists the policies of the state.<sup>25</sup>

Ethnic or racial diversity is not in itself evil, though it contributes to human problems (Genesis 11). However, culture or ethnicity itself is not helpful in defining nations, since nations are fluid and sometimes transient, geographically and historically, a fact recognized in the Bible (Acts 17:26). Nationalism or nation building is therefore not to be confused with ethnocentricity, or racism.<sup>26</sup>

According to *Church And State And Nation Building: A Conference Report* a Christian concern for society holds up to a vision of a just social order. Such an order has the following marks :

A Christian concern for society holds up a vision of a just social order. Such an order has the following marks:

- 1) The preservation, promotion and defence by the state of the right to life of every person.
- 2) A political constitution which sets limits to the scope of political action so that the basic rights of the people, such as freedom of speech, of religion, of thought and of assembly are not infringed, and which is upheld by an independent

strong judiciary. 3) Equal protection for all under the law. 4) Access to enjoy the benefits of one's own labour. 5) The right of people to decide who shall govern them, and to be able to hold such a government accountable with regards to its competence and honesty. 6) The biblical testimony clearly expresses the spirit of democracy. Israel as a people is regarded as a covenantal partner with God, not just as His subjects. God ceded to Israel the choice of its own forms of government (1 Sam. 8). It was even given the freedom to renew or not to renew the covenant with God (Joshua 24).<sup>27</sup>

### **Democracy**

The following is our National Pledge:

We, the people of India (irrespective of caste, creed, race, sex, place of birth) solemnly resolve – to constitute India into a Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic, and secure to all citizens: Justice, social, economic and political; Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; Equality of status and of opportunity; and to promote among all Fraternity, assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and the integrity of the nation.<sup>28</sup>

Democracy involves all that is said in the above paragraph. It involves rights, privileges and opportunities. If people do not realise those socio-economic and political ideals, in their day-to-day life, they would experience frustration and disappointments. During the recent years people feel that something has gone wrong with the parliamentary democracy. Political instability is becoming common in the countries of Africa and Asia. Yet the people of the Two-Thirds-World continue to consider that among all the political systems, democracy is the best.<sup>29</sup>

The secular and liberal nature of the Constitution of the Republic of India was a well-planned and bold

attempt to leave behind the country's rigid hierarchical, discriminatory and exclusionary Brahminical Hindu social order to usher in a new democratic social order.

As the Constitution was a well thought out attempt to leave behind India's rigid hierarchical, discriminatory and exclusionary social and cultural baggage of some 3,000 years, and usher in a new egalitarian social order devoid of caste, class, and other features of the traditional social order, it included every Indian, irrespective of status and social placement, under its purview, and committed the nation bury deep this baggage at the earliest opportunity.<sup>30</sup>

Currently democracy is an important issue for the people of Asian and African countries. Nations, more and more come to believe that democracy is an indispensable form of government. This has become true after the fall of communism in Europe and Apartheid in South Africa. For the most part nations of the world do not support military and dictatorial form of governments.

Democracy is government of the people by the people and for the people.<sup>31</sup> The word democracy comes from two Greek terms *demos* (populace) and *kratos* (power). According to Giovanni Sartori Greek democracy during the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C was a direct democracy based on the actual participation of the people in their Government, whereas today's democracies are based on representation and not on people's participation.

Greek democracy during the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C was a direct democracy based on actual participation of the citizens in their Government, a Government of the people over the people in which all commended each, and each in his turn all; operated as a "town-meeting" democracy in which some thousands of citizens expressed their ayes and nays and consisted largely of decisions made by acclamation; and so on. ...Modern democracies are



based on representation and not on participation; presupposed delegation and not direct exercise of power; are a system of control and limitation of Government and not a system of self-government; people who are governed are not the same as who govern; and "electoral participation: does not in anyway resemble the real participation of the Greek citizen."<sup>32</sup>

Democracy requires functioning institutions, public accountability, the rule of law, free political debate, an active civil society, the recognition of minority rights, economic freedom and such like. Only such a liberal and secular democracy would foster economic growth and social mobility of all the people of the country.<sup>33</sup>

At present democracy has come to imply universal suffrage (the right of all adults to vote), competition for office, freedom of speech and the press and the rule of law. According to Justice Ramaprasada Rao Democracy is not a mere form, but is a special condition of society. Democracy is one of the highest human attributes and related to the inalienable dignity of mankind which no force, however, humiliating can destroy. He goes on to contend that,

Democracy exists when freedom is guaranteed to citizens, and when a citizen has right to adjust himself with the society and its environments, when equal opportunity is given to all, when adult franchise is the badge of authority and when and where the rule of law and the due process of law are respected at all times by all means and wherever and whenever necessary.<sup>34</sup>

Democracy is both innovative and resourceful. It is a mechanism that manufactures creative pleasure like peace, prosperity, happiness and independence while it avoids the 'dims' of mankind which when expatiated would mean disease, illiteracy, malnutrition and squalor.<sup>35</sup>

The process of democratisation is important so that pluralistic governance may be established in which change of government will be through people's vote and not through any other means. For the most part people who live in the Two-Thirds World countries do not realise their right and responsibility to vote. Moreover politicians often bribe the same poor and the oppressed who often blame the government for their misery. Common people ought to be educated in order to be responsible.<sup>36</sup>

Consequently, today in most of the Asian and African countries democracy is not a serious matter. In fact democracy has little meaning and people really have no control over the affairs of the country. Political parties voted for a term often make irreversible policies that affect the people for the worst.

The present day democracy is only a formal democracy. It is only in name that authority resides in the people and that Government is merely their servant. Representatives once elected do what they like, and it is a delusion to think that the people can control policy by changing them at the next election. In this scientific age with so much knowledge explosion in such a short time, their tenure of five years or so are equivalent to the old regimes of fifty years. Within their five years they can do so much and of such a nature that their successors would not be able to undo it.<sup>37</sup>

Democracy refers to both a form of government and a way of life. Democracy as a form of government – a system a majority self-rule under guarantees of freedom for the individual. Such a democratic government presupposes the common acceptance of certain values that we mean by democratic values. The equality of all persons before the law; Freedom for all people from discrimination on grounds of religion, colour or race; Freedom to express themselves in all matters, including

religion and politics. These and similar values are essentially human values.<sup>38</sup>

To express Christian values about democracy, democracy must embrace social, political and economic democracy. It must express the Christian concern for equality and for the dignity of each person.<sup>39</sup>

Nevertheless, democratic systems cannot guarantee just and fair results. Democracies are vulnerable to influence by other means of power. The temptation of power can influence the media and public servants to use their office for private gain. Parties in power can use their executive (decision-making) authority to manipulate the process of representation in their favour, or if they have large enough majorities in some cases to change written constitutions where they exist. All these are taking place before our eyes in India.<sup>40</sup>

During the recent decades time and again it has been proved that even the democratic State can become repository of power and coercion. Recent enactment of Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO) and the proposed Foreign Contribution Management and Control (FCMC) Bill are sufficient to illustrate the case. For the minorities such as Christians and Muslims both POTO and FCMC are replete with draconian provisions and are fascist in nature. An Ex-Chairman, Tamil Nadu State minorities Commission contends that,

The BJP government's attempt to curb foreign contribution to Christian organisations and other NGOs is mischievous. The Government has hitherto taken no effort to eradicate poverty and has no programme to alleviate the sufferings of the 50 per cent of the people who are living under the poverty line. On the other hand, it is a matter of regret that the Christian and numerous other secular NGOs who come forward to relieve their sufferings are prevented from doing so which only goes

to prove that BJP is not only anti-national but also anti-poor. One wonders whether the BJP, through the inhuman provisions of laws like POTO and FCMC, is trying to replace the Indian Constitution with Manu Dharma, which says that the *shudra* should not possess properties or riches and that the Brahmin has the right to confiscate his property.<sup>41</sup>

Many MPs cautioned the government at the time of POTO's introduction that it would be misused and that the political opponents would be the victims. Yet the government gone ahead and got it passed at a joint session of Parliament after the Rajya Sabha rejected it. However, as contended by Kuldip Nayar, a former Indian high commissioner in London, the law is wrong in concept. Its execution is bound to be faulty. Recent police arrests have proved that the law has eroded democratic values.<sup>42</sup>

Furthermore, the civil society that is supposed to direct and strengthen the Parliamentary democracy often fails in its duty which is possible when the state hegemonises the civil society.

The state exercises effective power because it has hegemonised civil society through the politics of cultural production. Conversely, dominant groups in civil society and their projects are both legitimised and shielded by the state. The state and civil society in effect feed upon each other. Events in India in the last two decades bear this analysis out amply. It has become a truism by now that since the mid 1980s, the BJP has carefully worked its way towards capturing power at the Centre by evoking the politics of religious fundamentalism in India's civil society.<sup>43</sup>

One of the drawbacks of the Indian as well as African democracy is that, politicians and the political parties are unwilling to accept defeat in the elections. No party



would accept losing the chance to rule the country. Political parties do not conduct themselves democratically any more. Once they come to power, they try to alienate their opponents. The ever power mongering politicians produce hatred and animosity and never want to work together for the sake of the country.

Owing to the adversarial form of politics ... the winners of parliamentary and civic elections tend to alienate their opponents so much to as to evoke despair among the losers. Whenever it appears as if the losers have no chance of ever coming to power, the recipe for civil strife is ready. There is hardly any evidence – in any African country – to show that when an opposition party wins the elections it conducts itself more ‘democratically’ than the party it replaces. In fact, the opposite is more often the case. The taste of power seems to encourage revenge and make political reconciliation impossible. Yet without compromise and reconciliation, democracy will remain illusory.<sup>44</sup>

While political parties are normally regarded as a must for democracy, it is also true that it is the party-system, which has brought democracy to bad name. For the most part the parties are corrupt. Arunachalam wrote that,

The charge-sheet against political parties is a long one. A party, as its very name implies, stands only for a part of a society. As such allegiance to a party is inconsistent with loyalty to society. And the existence of political parties works against democracy, for, with the rise of the party system the idea of popular sovereignty became a constitutional fiction.<sup>45</sup>

Corruption is one of the serious problems with democracy. Politicians, bureaucrats, judiciary and almost every democratic system are corrupt in India. Judges face a credibility crisis in dealing with important

cases such as "Babri Masjid demolition which is the focus of much of the communal troubles of the last decade from the Bombay riots of 1992-1993 to the present Gujarat riots".<sup>46</sup> Rajindar Sachar in his article on *Whither the Judiciary?* writes that,

The lament "something is rotten in the state of Denmark" (Hamlet) aptly fits in with that of the highest judicial authority (Chief Justice of India), Justice S.P.Bharucha, when he bemoaned that the integrity of about 20 per cent of the higher judiciary was in doubt. ... There are credible complaints against the higher judiciary.<sup>47</sup>

Corruption scandals are common in India. V.T.Rajshekar maintains that,

Who is not corrupt in India? Corruption is the rule, not the exception, at every level of public life in India. ... Taking bribe and giving bribe is so common in India which is one of the worst corrupt countries in the world. Even Hindu temples are not above corruption. A list of bribes to be paid to god to open the gates to heaven is displayed prominently at the entrance to every temple. ... So nobody is surprised when corruption scandals are exposed. Those who are in power expose the corruption of their opponents. When these opponents come to power they do the same. If the Hindu nazi rulers are corrupt, ... the Marxists are still worse. The upper castes became rulers only through corrupt means.<sup>48</sup>

Corruption affects African democracy too. J.J.Ongong while writing about democratisation in Africa maintains that,

One of the most serious and pervasive problems of democracy is corruption. This does not mean that in a single party system there is no corruption. But then the excuse in one-party systems is that there is no freedom

to exercise a control. In a pluralist political environment, however, it frustrates the electorate when those who are democratically elected to public office are accused of political impropriety.<sup>49</sup>

It is worthy of note that in India recently all political parties joined hands to water down a Supreme Court directive regarding disclosures of criminal records, educational qualifications and assets and liabilities of candidates contesting polls. The all-party meeting, instead, decided to move a Bill in the forthcoming monsoon session of Parliament to "circumvent" the apex court's directive. The parties were of the opinion that electoral reforms must come from within the legislature and not be imposed by either the apex court or the Election Commission. In its May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2002 judgment, the Supreme Court had directed that all candidates should declare, among other things, their educational background, criminal cases against them, if any and assets and liabilities.<sup>50</sup>

India is still an emerging democracy. After over fifty years of independence our question is what has gone wrong with Indian democracy. As was expected, the country did not grow into a full-fledged democracy. P.Radhakrishnan examines that,

Despite what our political leaders say, India is still a nascent democracy; it has not yet grown into a full blooded one. Life and freedom of the kind and quality which Jawaharlal Nehru and B.R. Ambedkar would have liked India's unwashed millions to have through their liberation from age-old communal and cultural quagmires of prejudices and antagonisms, ignorance, illiteracy, poverty and economic enslavement, and access to anything like terms of equality, to well endowed opportunity structures in society, are still a far cry. And, if as Nehru said, it is the vitality of the past, which

enriches the present, the moribund state of the nation for over 50 years now, that is, after the Constitution came into force, has only impoverished our present.

So, one might ask what has gone wrong with our democratic institutions and democratic structures, and whether the entrenched nature of our inertia, ineptitude, and intellectual and moral turpitude leave any scope at all for reflection and reparation.<sup>51</sup>

One of the findings of a *Seminar on Social Justice, Democracy and Religion* was that,

The democratic process in India has not succeeded in becoming a means for achieving social justice. The structures of democracy in India-legal, administrative, electoral and party-are controlled by the privileged few and they use them to further their vested interests. The present legal system is slow in meeting our justice and there are obsolete laws, which impede the growth of a socialistic pattern of state. The constitution, in spite of the lofty principle it embodies, does not provide the necessary dynamism to bring about a just society. The goals of democracy are thwarted by forces such as casteism, communalism illiteracy, the lack of information about the miseries of the poor, the ignorance of masses about the structures that oppress them, etc.<sup>52</sup>

Yet for the most part so far democracy has been successful in India. Although for some scientists democracy is an obstacle to higher economic growth, it is critically important to observe that, because of democracy the minorities, the poor, the oppressed, the tribals, Dalits and women could attain social mobility. In other words, in spite of all the imperfections, the scope for vertical mobility in India is far more than in many relatively autocratic countries.<sup>53</sup>

Also, there are reasons why democracy will be alive and reasonably well for another few decades. R.E.Millar suggests three reasons:



The first relates to the fact that the Indian system is not throwing up strong leaders who might take society into a new direction. This lack of dominant leaders is a reality in many societies in the world today. It can bring weakness and even chaos, but it can also result in the continuation of the tradition. The second factor is that the currently upward mobile economic development in India precludes the perceived need for and undermined a possible basis for the emergence of demagogic leadership. Finally, the coalition format of contemporary politics has been at least subconsciously accepted by the populace as a balance-of-power methodology appropriate for a multicultural and multi-religious political reality.<sup>54</sup>

The Christians have the responsibility to guard democracy. They collectively as well as individually have a very important role in shielding some of the process on which democracies depend for their just functioning.<sup>55</sup>

1. To engage in moral and political education so that people know their rights and the working of the democratic process, and are instilled with a respect for their country's democratic constitution and institutions. This enables them to want what is just and fair.
2. To encourage just and fair elections; where appropriate, by campaigning for an election commission which is independent of the executive power; by engaging in the monitoring of election.
3. To encourage active participation in the political system and nation building process.
4. To encourage and defend a free press
5. To do research and study which will provide the information necessary for suggesting and

formulating policy initiatives. Research Institutions and informal networks of Christian thinkers, to monitor policy developments and set out just and equitable proposals, can make an important contribution.

6. To protest and suggest changes when unjust policies are proposed and implemented.

### **Conclusion**

India's connection with Britain was not a misfortune but has positively influenced many areas of social life especially the politics in this country. It was the British who introduced in us the spirit of nationalism and democratic values. Consequently by the turn of 20<sup>th</sup> century with the help of the British, India emerged from feudalism to a liberal democracy. Indeed Indian parliamentary democracy was a bold attempt as well as a confident experiment. There is no doubt that democracy has so far succeeded in India except in some places where the Hindu fundamentalists have created communal consciousness and a culture of ethnic and racial exclusion.

The minorities, especially the Christians of the depressed class origin have contributed a great deal to nation building. The role of the Christian and other minorities is to function as the conscience of the nation. Democracy requires the recognition of minority rights and when their rights are violated democracy collapses it self. This has been the reality in some parts of India today.

The minorities, especially the Dalit Christians do not have to feel that they are oppressed minorities, but they have to think that they are equally citizens of this country like any other persons so that they could continue to play an important role in nation building.

**End Notes:**

- <sup>1</sup> For instance the Emperor Frederick I claimed to rule both the city of Rome and the whole globe by the will of God. It is important to note that, "in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries it was not the Emperor with his weak and remote authority who mattered in the political sphere, but the rulers of the new nations which were coming into existence as people of mixed races developed a common national consciousness. These new nations had each a distinct language and culture and their independent middle classes possessed a highly developed political sense. In the place of organic unity which in earlier years had belonged to the Empire as whole, separate parts of the Empire, particularly England and France developed a unity of their own under the rule of their energetic kings." H.C.Lefever, The History of Reformation, (Madras: CLS, 1971), pp.7-8.
- <sup>2</sup> A.Hastings, The Construction of Nationhood, Ethnicity Religion and Nationhood, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.10. Ninian Smart, Religion and Nationalism, (Rome: Centre for Indian and Inter-religious Studies, 1994), p.28.
- <sup>3</sup> H.Kohn, "Nationalism" International Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences, New York: Macmillan Co., 1968), p.63. Quoted by Leela D'Souza, "Ethnic Nationalism in India – An Appraisal", VJTR Vol.66, (January, 2002), p.44.
- <sup>4</sup> Vincent Kumaradoss, "Nationalism and Christianity in Colonial India", Unpublished Seminar paper, Mission Studies Forum, (Bangalore February 26, 2000), p.1. Dr.Kumaradoss' arguments are based on M.S.S.Pandian, "Meaning of Colonialism and Nationalism: An Essay on Vaikunda Swamy Cult", Studies in History, Vol.8, No.2, 1992.

- <sup>5</sup> Leela D'Souza, Ethnic Nationalism in India, p.38.
- <sup>6</sup> Christianity provided a critique of all religions with an exclusive claim. It became therefore a basis for the idea of the transcendental unity of all religions. As a result all the religions of India such as Buddhism, Jainism, Vaishnavism, Saivism are joined together and made one grand religion called Hinduism. Ninian Smart, Religion and Nationalism, p.34.
- <sup>7</sup> Vincent Kumaradoss, Nationalism and Christianity, p.8.
- <sup>8</sup> Romila Thapar, Harbans Mukhia and Bipan Chandra, Communalism and the writing of Indian History, (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1981), pp.45-47. Quoted by Vincent Kumaradoss, Nationalism and Christianity, pp.8-10. Italics are mine.
- <sup>9</sup> V.D. Savarkar supported German Nazism and Italian Facism. He wrote that, "Germany has every right to resort to Nazism and Italy to Facism and events have justified that those isms and forms of governments were imperative and benefited to them under the conditions that obtained there... But it should be made clear to the German, Italian, or Japanese public that crores of Hindu Sanghatanists in India whom neither Pandit Nehru or nor the Congress represents, cherish no ill will towards Germany or Italy or Japan or any other country in the world simply because they had chosen a form of government or constitutional policy which they thought suited best and contributed most to their National solidarity and strength". R.A.Ravishankar, "The Real Savarkar", Frontline, (August 2, 2002), p.17.
- <sup>10</sup> M.S.Golwalkar, We or Our Nationhood Defined " In the modern Indian history Hindutva came as a revival. We may call 1875 as the revival of Hindutva when Arya Samaj was founded by Swamy Dayanand. Bankim



Chandra Chatterjee aired Hindu nationalism around 1882. Today's Hindutva inherited a fascist character when Savaricar landed in England 1906 in order to study Italian Hindutva. Hindu Sabha was formed in the year 1909: In 1925 RSS (Rastriya Swayamsevak Sangh) was formed in Nagpur by K.S.Hedgewar. In 1940 Golwalkar was the author of Hindutva's charter viz. "We or our nationhood defined", became the RSS chief. Golwalkar imparted military training to RSS cadres". P.M.Manohar, "Political Challenges and Mission Perspectives", W.S.Milton Jeganathan (ed), Mission Paradigm in the New Millennium, (Delhi: ISPCK, 2000), p.306.

- <sup>11</sup> Melwin Pereira, "Hindutva and Hatred on Minorities", Social Action, Vol.50, No.3, (July-September, 2000), pp.303ff.
- <sup>12</sup> James Alter, "Liberty, Equality and fraternity: Themes in Anglo-Saxon Protestant Missions", Indian Church History Review, Vol.VIII, No.1, (September, 1974), p.15ff.
- <sup>13</sup> Vincent Kumaradoss, "Attitude of Protestant Missionaries", Indo British Review, Vol.XV, No.1, (January, 1978), p.1.
- <sup>14</sup> Y.V.Kumara Doss, "The Swadeshi Movement", ICHR, Vol.XXII, No.1, p.5.
- <sup>15</sup> G.A.Oddie, "Indian Christians and the National Congress 1885-1910", Indian Church History Review, (June, 1968), Vol.II, No.1, pp.45-55. See Appendix – 3 for details.
- <sup>16</sup> D.A.Jeyakumar, Christians and the National Movement, (Calcutta: Punthi Pustak. 1999), pp.121-122.
- <sup>17</sup> Persecution of Christians by Hindus was a major reason for non-involvement of Christians in national politics. G.A.Oddie, Indian Christians and the National Congress, pp.53-54. See Appendix - 4.

- <sup>18</sup> According to Bishop F.J.Western there were Christians from the Anglican Tirunelveli Diocese took part in the National Movement. F.J.Wester, "A Memorandum for the Missionary Council of Church Assembly", (August 1, 1938), Tirunelveli SPG Reports.
- <sup>19</sup> The Guardian, Vol.9, No.33, (August 20, 1931), p.395 (Tamil Nadu Archives)
- <sup>20</sup> It is worthy of note because Daniel Thomas was a Dalit Shanar (now Nadar) Christian. The Nadars before converting to Christ were an untouchable people. They were considered worse than the Parayas. For details see R.L.Hardgrave, The Nadars of Tamilnad: The Political Culture of a Community in Change, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California press, 1969), pp.12-42. S.Jayakumar, Dalit Consciousness and Christian Conversion: Historical Resources for a Contemporary Debate, (Delhi: ISPCK & Oxford: Regnum, 1999), pp.75ff.
- <sup>21</sup> For details about Azariah's contribution see ibid., pp.289-320.
- <sup>22</sup> S.B.harper, In the Shadow of the Mahatma: Bishop V.S.Azariah and the Travails of the Christianity in British India, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), p.4.
- <sup>23</sup> "Church And State And Nation Building: A Conference Repor, Hong Kong, 19988", Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden (ed), Mission as Transformation, (Oxford: Regnum, 1999), p.466.
- <sup>24</sup> ibid., p.462
- <sup>25</sup> ibid., p.466.
- <sup>26</sup> Church And State And Nation Building, p.459.
- <sup>27</sup> ibid., p.468.

- <sup>28</sup> See the Preamble of the Constitution of India.
- <sup>29</sup> P.Radhakrishnan, "Democratic Governance", The Hindu, Chennai, April 15, 2002.
- <sup>30</sup> ibid. Cf. Neera Chandhoke, "Why Minority Rights", The Hindu, Chennai, July 27<sup>th</sup>, 2002.
- <sup>31</sup> See "Democracy" in Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, (London: Longman, 1978).
- <sup>32</sup> P.Radhakrishnan, "Democratic Governance", Hindu, Chennai, April 15, 2002
- <sup>33</sup> Sanjay Baru, "Democracy with six percent", Hindu, July 29, 2002.
- <sup>34</sup> Justice T.Ramaprasada Rao, "The Working of Democracy in India", Seminar on Social Justice, Democracy and Religion, (Madras Gurukul, 1973), p.19.
- <sup>35</sup> ibid, pp.19-20.
- <sup>36</sup> J.J.Ongong'a, Challenges Towards Democratisation, pp.18-19.
- <sup>37</sup> K.Arunachalam, "Relevance of Sarvodaya for Indian Democracy Today", Seminar on Social Justice, p.38.
- <sup>38</sup> T.K.Thomas, "The Democratic Values and Structures of Religion", Seminar on Social Justice, p.53.
- <sup>39</sup> Church and State And Nation Building., pp.468-469
- <sup>40</sup> Church and State And Nation Building, p.469. Revision of Indian Constitution has been taking place under the present BJP Government.
- <sup>41</sup> Bishop M.Ezra Sargunam, "Protest against POTO and the proposed FCMC Bill", Abridgement of Presidential Address, December 1, 2001, p.1.
- <sup>42</sup> Kuldeep Nayar, "Authoritarian Impulses", Hindu, Chennai, July 22, 2002.

- <sup>43</sup> Neera Chandoke, "The New Tribalism", Hindu, Chennai, April 4, 2002. Certainly communal violence and nation building are contradictory in nature, but not for the present government of India. During the recent months the BJP has effectively used the Hindu fundamentalist process for nation building. It has communalised the nation's polity to achieve its selfish ends. For details See The Gujarat Pogrom: Compilation of Various Reports, (Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 2002)
- <sup>44</sup> L.Magesa and Z.Nthamburi (ed), Democracy and Reconciliation: A Challenge for African Christianity, (Nairobi: Action publishers, 1999), pp.1-2.
- <sup>45</sup> ibid, p.40
- <sup>46</sup> Manoj Mitta, "Judges Face a Credibility Crisis", Indian Express, Chennai, August 8, 2002.
- <sup>47</sup> Rajindar Sachar, "Whither the Judiciary?", Hindu, Chennai, May 15, 2002.
- <sup>48</sup> V.T.Rajshakar, "Corruption scandal further weakens Vajpayee", Dalit Voice, Vol.20, No.9, (April 16-31, 2001), p.3.
- <sup>49</sup> J.J.Ongong'a, "Challenges towards Democratisation in Africa", in L.Magesa and Z.Nthamburi (ed), Democracy and Reconciliation, pp.19-20.
- <sup>50</sup> The Telegraph, July 9, 2002.
- <sup>51</sup> P.Radhakrishnan, "Democratic Governance", Hindu, April 16, 2002.
- <sup>52</sup> "Findings", Social Justice and Democracy, p.82.
- <sup>53</sup> For details see B.Debroy, "Democracy is non-negotiable", Indian Express, Chennai, August, 8, 2002. Both Abdul Kalam and Dhirubhai ambani are now topical. There have been several news reports about students from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds making it to



ITTs. Take a random sample of of students from several African, East Asian or even other South Asian countries. The Indian sample will be far more representative of the Indian polity, regardless of the socio-economic backgrounds of the students. This phenomenon, and the underlying *democratic* structure that sustains it, ought to non-negotiable. Despite its warts." ibid. Italics are mine.

- <sup>54</sup> R.E.Miller, "India Colloquium: VisionPaper", in P.V.Martinson, (ed), Mission at the Dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, (Minneapolis: Kirk House, 1999), pp.135-136.

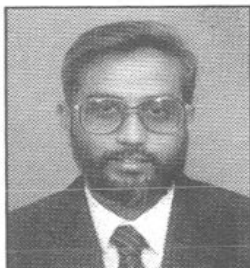
## Chapter - VII

### CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION TO INDIAN DEMOCRACY AND NATIONALISM

**K**hushwant Singh, an Indian Journalist confirmed this and said; "Protestants took active part in suppression of *Sati*<sup>1</sup>, ending female infanticide, and suppressing the Thugs<sup>2</sup>; alleviating the condition of Hindu widows and temple prostitutes; raising the marriage etc."<sup>3</sup>

#### **Christ Principles gave new freedom to people:**

The Christians were often misunderstood only as the converters of people from one religion to another. In a matter of fact, Christians precipitated revolution in India by preaching the values and ethos Christ in the form of teaching the Good News of Christ, disciplining the fellow Indians to rethink many of the Indian base values, some of which were inhuman and evil. On the process, the Christians established Christ worshipping changed peoples, advocated social change for the better of the



**Dr. K. Rajendran** - General Secretary, India Missions Association with nearly 200 member missions, making it as the largest missions' federation in the world. He is also the Chairman of the WEA Missions Commission and the Vice Chair of the Great Commission Roundtable.

nation and even stimulated the Freedom Movement by influencing the fathers of the new India. Thus the Christians were involved in building the nation by creating new ethos for life which gave better human values. This attracted many Indians to embrace Christianity who otherwise were suppressed under heavy bondages of inhumanism under bonded labour system and caste oppression, *Sati*, child marriage, elimination of girl children, heavy dowry bondages to get the girls married off, vast inequality between male and female which kept women not educated for thousands of years and other such demeaning wicked practices.

In the midst of it the practicing of Christ principles and following Christ freed and delivered from age old oppression. Even though the country was freed from the foreign oppression of the Moguls and Europeans over centuries, the country was never free from the human oppression and bondages created by the fellow Indians in the name of caste, religion and other novel sounding justifications. That is why even people like Khuswant Singh, though not Christians, acknowledged the contribution of Christianity to the modern India. Age old Indian philosophies and high thoughts have not created a equal society but society where one oppressed the other. But the fresh practices of Christ principles have freed men from such bondages.

### **Christians impacted the secular emerging India**

By the indirect influence of the Christians the present India remains a secular and not a sectarian nation. According to Stephen Neill, a well wisher of India, Raja Ram Mohan Roy's reformations were influenced by Christians and their teaching with whom he was in league with.<sup>4</sup> The historian, Ruth Tucker recorded that William Carey, a friend of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, was regarded as the Father of modern Christian

endeavours.<sup>5</sup> Carey also aided banning many deplorable practices such as *Sati*.<sup>6</sup> He introduced modern journalism, publishing both vernacular Bengali and English newspapers and magazines. He stimulated a renaissance of Bengali literature.<sup>7</sup> Carey had three pre-suppositions. They were; salvation was God's work.<sup>8</sup> Man was created in God's image and thus he is capable of managing His creation.<sup>9</sup> A lasting reformation could come only through the change of heart and mindset with the values that the Lord Jesus Christ taught. This led Carey to firmly believe and share the Good News of Christ.<sup>10</sup> One of Carey's associates, Henry Martyn also had similar goals namely establishing native schools, preaching the Gospel in Hindostanee [Hindustani] and preparing translations of the Scriptures and tracts for dispersion.<sup>11</sup> Stephen Neill added that Carey's achievement was possible only by his commitment to unremitting industry, minute attention to the expenditure of time and rigorous time schedule.<sup>12</sup> Isaac Taylor Headland wrote that the products of missions are regenerated human beings, while all other things are simply by-products.<sup>13</sup>

Christian Friedrich Schwartz, a German Christian friend who began his work at Tranqubar, Trichinopoly<sup>14</sup> and then later at Tanjore<sup>15</sup> had much to do with the kings of Tanjore. He was reputed to be of high integrity and many trusted him more than others.<sup>16</sup> Because of this quality he was able to be a loyal friend of Tulasi Raja.<sup>17</sup> Then he also became the teacher to Serfogee Raja, the adopted son of Tulasi Raja.<sup>18</sup> Even Hyder Ali, a Muslim ruler, had a high regard for Schwartz.<sup>19</sup> Schwartz brought peace between the English and French rulers and dissolved misunderstandings.<sup>20</sup> He was involved in preserving the throne of Tanjore by rescuing the right king, Serfogee and became his effective guardian. When Schwartz was dead, Serfogee recorded his gratitude in



an inscription at Tanjore.<sup>21</sup> In 1801, Serfogee Raja wrote to the S.P.C.K.<sup>22</sup>, "O, gentlemen, that you were but able to send missionaries here who should resemble the departed Schwartz!"<sup>23</sup>

A large number of Christians associated with the Indian freedom movement. Allan Octavian Hume was the first president of the Indian National Congress. C. F. Andrews, Stanley Jones, Fred B. Fisher Clifford Manshardt, Stokes - went a long way towards changing the popular misconception that Christianity was the other side of the Imperialist coin.<sup>24</sup> Stanley Jones, an American friend who lived in India, was vocal about his stand with the Indians for the freedom of India.<sup>25</sup> At times, he struggled with the ruling British Government as he aspired the freedom of India.<sup>26</sup> Jones was even willing to receive the nationalists to his gathering.<sup>27</sup> Because of his influence Ralph T. Templin formed *Krishtagraha* movement<sup>28</sup> which was similar to *Satyagraha* movement<sup>29</sup> started by Gandhiji. The ideology of the *Krishtagraha* movement was to re-orientate Christianity away from being pro-Western and toward achieving a soul of its own, tied in closely to mother India.<sup>30</sup> M.M. Thomas wrote that Jones was the foremost Christian evangelists who sought to understand and interpret Gandhi sympathetically from within the orthodoxy of the Christian Church.<sup>31</sup> C.F. Andrews was another friend who had an enormous influence upon the Indians by his identification with Mahatma Gandhi and Tagore.<sup>32</sup>

Bishop Waskom Pickett, an American Methodist Bishop, closely related with Jawaharlal Nehru<sup>33</sup> and Indira Gandhi.<sup>34</sup> In 1948, Nehru fearing Gandhi's assassination trusted Pickett to convince Gandhi to leave Delhi. Even though Gandhi did not leave Delhi, he commented, "All my hopes for a better India are being destroyed." Then Pickett expressed that "the Christians were working for peace and patriotism." In response

Gandhi was planning to publicly apologise to the Christians of India for not being fair to them.<sup>35</sup> When Gandhi was assassinated, the first memorial service anywhere in India, was held at Lucknow in a large Methodist church.<sup>36</sup> After Independence, Pickett also was involved in sorting out national problems when there were community clashes between Sikhs and Hindus.<sup>37</sup>

While Pickett was in Bihar, at Arrah, he encouraged an young man of the leather-work caste, a Dhusiya Chamar who eventually became well known as Jag Jeevan Ram and got involved in politics and became a cabinet member, in Nehru's Prime-minister-ship. He served as Minister of Agriculture, Railways and Defense.<sup>38</sup>

When Bishop Pickett and Dr Ambedkar become friends, Ambedkar took many Christian books from Pickett and distributed them to many of his colleagues. After two years Ambedkar asked him to baptise him secretly while he continued to be a politician. He wanted Pickett to train and baptise 1000 of Ambedkar's candidates without coming come under the authority of the Church and discipline. Pickett refused to baptise him secretly, unless it was publicly announced.<sup>39</sup> Even today it has been debated if Pickett should have accepted the offer of Dr. Ambedkar!

In 1969, when Dr Radha Krishnan hosted Bishop and Mrs Pickett to luncheon, Radha Krishnan complimented the impact of Indian Christians in India as the keepers of law and order.<sup>40</sup> Thus was the influence and participation of Bishop Jarrell Waskom Pickett in the nation, especially with the politicians. Swami John Dharma Theerthan well said, "The immediate effect of the impact of Christianity was a resurgence of moral and spiritual aspirations in opposition to all evils in the nation."<sup>41</sup> Khushwant Singh

objectively observed the missionaries [and Christians] as helpers of the nation.<sup>42</sup>

### **Christians touched and impacted every section of the society**

Stephen Neill in 1934 wrote, "In almost every corner of the country, the Christian Church has touched every stratum of society."<sup>43</sup> Neill was euphoric about the Indian Church growth. Singh agreed with such a growth ... and zeal."<sup>44</sup>

### **Christians service to the down-trodden of India**

The Christians and missionaries worked very hard to uplift the poor, the down-trodden, the outcastes and the marginalised who were the victims of the Hindu philosophy of *Varnashrama Dharma*<sup>45</sup>. William Goudie, a Scottish Methodist friend, was one of those who uplifted the down-trodden.<sup>46</sup> E.W.Thompson said that Goudie was gathering in the out-castes by scores and hundreds and making provision to shepherd and instruct them.<sup>47</sup> Even today Goudie is remembered as there are institutions named after him at Ikkadu near Chennai.<sup>48</sup>

In the modern Independent India, the sacrificial Christians and dedicated missionaries went into the most rural areas of India and served peoples as a service to Christ because of their commitment to Christ. The schools, hospitals, the emancipated people groups across India would continue to be the witness to the services of Christians across the nation both as full-time Christian and NGO workers and as civil servants in the Indian Government and in other walks of life.

Thus, the Christians and missionaries have done a great deal for India in general and not just for Christians. This fact is acknowledged by objective and open minded people of India.

### Christians Impact on Indian Literacy

The Literary contribution to India by the Christians is also exceptional. "Christian institutions had been carrying on schools long before the government took a hand in the game."<sup>49</sup> Until a few years ago in many parts of India, ordinary schools were not open to the low-castes.<sup>50</sup> In Tranquebar the school even antedates the church.<sup>51</sup> "American missionaries compiled and published the earliest grammars and dictionaries of Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu and Marathi [languages]."<sup>52</sup> S.H. Kellogg who coalesced more than a dozen dialects to help create today's Hindi Grammar as *A Grammar of Hindi Language*, which is still in use.<sup>53</sup> In South India, the Strict Baptist missionaries have done much literary work including a Tamil dictionary and grammar.<sup>54</sup> Lucknow Christian College was the first institution in India to teach short-hand in English, Urdu and Hindi.<sup>55</sup> "Within a few years, mission schools with government aid were numbered by thousands. Over large areas every single school was a mission school."<sup>56</sup> J. H. Hodge, a Secretary of the National Christian Council of India, Burma and Ceylon prior to Indian Independence wrote that, "Allied to education is that other outreach of influential missionary endeavour, the ministry of Christian literature."<sup>57</sup> Moni Bagchee wrote that "The Christian missionaries rendered great service to the cause of mass education in Bengal through the people's own mother tongue, by improved methods suited to locals."<sup>58</sup> This situation would be applicable almost for the whole of India. According to Vishal Mangalwadi, Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore saw before any Indian nationalist was around about what missionaries had understood decades about education.<sup>59</sup>

### Christians Impact on Women's Education

In 1834, Caroline Atwater Mason wrote that only one percent of the Indian women could read and write.<sup>60</sup>



"Reading and writing were practically confined to nautch girls and not for respectable women."<sup>61</sup> In the midst of local disbelief and pessimism the Christians and missionaries believed that the girls could be educated and transformed. The Protestant missionaries' report of December twenty-eighth, 1707 said, that their Girls' school [at Tranquebar] was the first Christian school for Indian girls, in all of India.<sup>62</sup> Carolin Mason claimed that Hannah Marshman opened a first school for girls at Serampore in 1800.<sup>63</sup> In the early struggles of establishing the Strict Baptist Mission at Sendamangalam, Salem in South India, the husband and wife team of David and Ruth Morling established a Higher Elementary school for girls.<sup>64</sup>

In 1870, Miss Isabella Thoburn started a school in her verandah at Lucknow. Even the fathers of those girls uttered that it was easier to teach their cows than their women were. But Miss Thoburn persisted, and eventually her graduates were scattered all over India, Burma, and Srilanka.<sup>65</sup> Isabella Thoburn was reputed as the founder of the first women's college in all of Asia. With her came Dr. Clara A. Swain, the first woman medical missionary of any society, and the founder of the first hospital for women in all Asia.<sup>66</sup>

Rajaiah D. Paul, as back as in 1952 reported, that seven percent of all those in teaching professions were Indian Christians. He even distinctly recalled the time when a hundred percent of the women employed as school teachers were Indian Christians.<sup>67</sup>

Ida Scudder, a Christian missionary to South India, was instrumental for educating Indian women to be doctors and nurses in 1900. In 1947, men students also were admitted.<sup>68</sup> "For many years Anglo-Indians and Christians provided almost all the candidates for the entire nursing profession in India, other communities being unwilling to let their girls enter it."<sup>69</sup> Bishop Neill

commented in 1954 that, "Till recently Christian girls have had almost a monopoly of the nursing profession."<sup>70</sup> Dame Edith Brown did a similar thing in regard to hospital, training of doctors and nurses at Ludhiana, Punjab.<sup>71</sup> In 1944 the literacy rate of women increased to five percent.<sup>72</sup>

During the freedom struggle Mahatma Gandhi invited the women to join in with the nationalists. From then onwards both foreign and Indian Protestants adopted a positive attitude and recognised that the Indian women's situation was changing.<sup>73</sup> Thus, they saw the fruits of their labour in educating the women of India.

The reason for such endeavour was the core belief of the Christians that the girls were equivalent to men and all should have equal opportunity to learn.<sup>74</sup> Thus, the educational efforts of Indian women by the Christians have had a remarkable effect in changing the scene of India. This affected in helping the women to think and contribute to the society intelligently, and brought about the progressive spectacle of women's education in India.<sup>75</sup> According to 1994 census, women's literacy rate has grown to 39.42 percent compared to men's 63.86 percent.<sup>76</sup> "The Literacy rate in the country had increased from 18.33% in 1951 to 65.38% in 2001. Thus in five decades; the literacy percentage had grown by 47.05% or by an average of 9.41% per decade. According to the 2001 Census, male literacy was 75.85% and female literacy 54.16%.<sup>77</sup>

Missionaries of the past have contributed to this progress in lifting womanhood and have inspired other Indians of all religions to catch the vision of education.<sup>78</sup> The Christian ethos of men and women's equality in the sight of God was demonstrated by the upliftment of the women of India through their education pioneered by

the Christians. Khushwant Singh aptly concluded that they [the missionaries] did a splendid work.<sup>79</sup>

### Conclusion

In 1928, Professor John Jesudason Cornelius of Lucknow said, "Christian institutions have undoubtedly prepared the way for the mobilising of the thought power in India."<sup>80</sup> Swami Theerthan summarised the situation and said, "The transformation that has been effected in the inner and outer life of the nation is one of the profoundest phenomena of human history."<sup>81</sup> Rajaiah D. Paul wrote, "The educated Hindu has for the most part been profoundly affected by Christianity and the education he has received, perhaps in a Christian school or a college."<sup>82</sup>

Thus, the Christians have contributed much for the national benefit and enhanced India in the march forward. If Indians are forward in the IT industry across the world, it owes its allegiance to the education the Christian Institutions have provided and continuing to serve the nation. Education has a ripple effect in all aspects of the normal life of Indians.

I am very proud of being part of the legacy which served the nation selfless with the values of Christ and His teaching. Jai Bharat.

### End Notes:

<sup>1</sup> *Sati* was a practice of Hindus in burning the widows with their dead husbands. Although it was not practised by all Hindus, yet the gruesome practice was perpetuated by many as religious fanaticism. This practice was outlawed in 1829 by the British Viceroy William Bentinck to India through the efforts of William Carey and Raja Ram Mohun Roy.

<sup>2</sup> Thugs - Rowdies and Ruffians.

<sup>3</sup> Khushwant Singh. India: an Introduction. (New Delhi: Vision Books, 1992), p. 76.

- <sup>4</sup> Stephen Neill. History of Christian Missions (England: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 213, Quoted from [n.a.] *Religious Thoughts and life in India*, 1983, [n.pub.], [n.d.].
- <sup>5</sup> Ruth Tucker. William Carey Father of Modern Missions. John Woodbridge (Ed.), *Great Christian Leaders* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988), pp. 308-312.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid. p. 311.
- <sup>7</sup> R. Pierce Beaver. The History of the Mission Strategy. Ralph Winter, Steve Hawthorne et al (Eds.), *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement- A Reader* (California: William Carey library, 1981), p. 199.
- <sup>8</sup> Ruth & Vishal Mangalwadi. William Carey - A Tribute by an Indian Woman (Delhi: Nivedit Good Books, 1993), pp. 38-48.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid. pp. 38-48.
- <sup>10</sup> Mangalwadi. William Carey - A Tribute. pp. 38-48.
- <sup>11</sup> John Sargent. The life and letters of Henry Martyn. (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1985), p. 181.
- <sup>12</sup> Stephen Neill. Builders of the Indian Church. (London, Westminster: The Living Stone Press, 1934), p. 95.
- <sup>13</sup> Isaac Taylor Headland. Some By-products of Missions. (New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1912), p. 4.
- <sup>14</sup> Thiruchirapalli
- <sup>15</sup> Tanjavur
- <sup>16</sup> Neill. Builders. p. 77.
- <sup>17</sup> Raja - King.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid. p. 79.
- <sup>19</sup> Firth. Indian Church History. P.137.
- <sup>20</sup> Stephen Neill. Colonialism and Christian Missions. (London: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1966), pp. 79-80.
- <sup>21</sup> Firth. Indian Church History. 139.
- <sup>22</sup> The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.
- <sup>23</sup> Neill. Builders. p. 79.
- <sup>24</sup> Singh. India. p. 76.
- <sup>25</sup> Richard W. Taylor. The Contribution of Stanley E. Jones. (Madras: CLS, 1973), p. 5.



- <sup>26</sup> Stanley Jones. "My Position Restored", *Indian Witness*. 11 April, 1940, P. 233. Quoted in Richard W. Taylor, *The Contribution of Stanley E. Jones* (Madras: CLS, 1973), p. 20.
- <sup>27</sup> Stanley E. Jones. *The Christ of the Indian Road* (Lucknow: Lucknow Publishing House, 1964), p. 16.
- <sup>28</sup> Taylor, *Stanley E. Jones*. pp. 18-19. Quoted from a letter to Taylor dated June 24, 1970, now deposited in the archives of the United Theological College Library, Bangalore.
- <sup>29</sup> *Satyagraha* movement. This literally means truth following movement. The emphasis of this was non-cooperation and non-violent against the then British rulers of India.
- <sup>30</sup> Taylor. *Stanley E. Jones*. pp. 18-19.
- <sup>31</sup> M.M. Thomas. The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance. (Madras: CISRS-CLS, 1970), p. 232.
- <sup>32</sup> Jack C. Winslow. The Eyelids of the Dawn. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1954), p. 75.
- <sup>33</sup> Bishop J.W. Pickett. My Twentieth Century Odyssey. (Bombay : Gospel Literature Service, 1980), p. 25.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid. p. 60d.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid. pp. 150-151.
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid. p. 152.
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid. p. 26.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid. pp. 30-31.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid. pp. 32-33.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid. pp. 31-32.
- <sup>41</sup> Swami John Dharma Theerthan, *Choice Before India: Communism - Catastrophe; Sarvodya - Christ* (Trichur: Mission to Hindus, [n.d.]), p. 17.
- <sup>42</sup> Singh, *India*. 75.
- <sup>43</sup> Neill, *Builders*. pp. 11-12.
- <sup>44</sup> Singh. *India*: pp. 75-76.
- <sup>45</sup> *Varnashrama Dharma* is a philosophy which holds the existence of the four upper castes and does not allow the backwards and the untouchables to be part of the high society. This practice has had kept the untouchables in a

state of poverty, illiteracy, ignorance and 3000 years of bondage.

- <sup>46</sup> James Lewis. William Goudie. (London: Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society. 1923), p. 103.
- <sup>47</sup> E.W.Thompson. The Call of India. (London: The Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society. 1912). p. 155.
- <sup>48</sup> K. Rajendran. Six Principles Learnt from the Life of William Goudie. Unpublished paper written as assignment for the course of "The Themes and Principles from Impoverishment" at SAIACS, Bangalore, November, 1995, pp. 1-10.
- <sup>49</sup> Stephen Neill. Under Three Flags. (New York: Friendship Press, 1954), p. 75.
- <sup>50</sup> Theerthan, *Choice Before India*: [n.d.] p. 16.
- <sup>51</sup> Neill. Under Three Flags. p. 76.
- <sup>52</sup> Singh. India: p. 75.
- <sup>53</sup> Ibid. p. 269.
- <sup>54</sup> John K.Thorpe, "*Other Sheep*" of the Tamil Fold. *The Centenary Story of the Strict Baptist Mission 1861-1960* (London: S.B.M. Publications, 1961), Pp. 34-36.
- <sup>55</sup> Pickett, *Odyssey*. p. 138.
- <sup>56</sup> Neill, *Under Three Flags*. pp. 76-77.
- <sup>57</sup> J. H. Hodge, *Salute to India* (London: S.C.M. Press Ltd., 1944), p. 98.
- <sup>58</sup> Moni Bagchee, Christian Missionaries in Bengal, in [n.a.], Christianity in India (Madras: Vivekananda Kendra Prakashan, 1979), p. 191.
- <sup>59</sup> Vishal Mangalwadi. Missionary Conspiracy: Letters to a Post-modern Hindu. (Mussoorie: Nivedit Books, 1996), p. 267.
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- <sup>61</sup> C.B.Firth. An Introduction to Indian Church History. (Madras: CLS, 1983), pp. 192-193.
- <sup>62</sup> E.Arno Lehmann. It Began at Tranquebar. (Madras:CLS, 1956), p.103.

- <sup>63</sup> Mason. Wonders of Missions. p. 265.
  - <sup>64</sup> Thorpe. Other Sheep. Pp. 34-36.
  - <sup>65</sup> Margaret Carver Ermsberger, *India Calling* (Lucknow: Lucknow Publishing House, 1956), p. 2.
  - <sup>66</sup> James K. Mathews. "The Mission to Southern Asia". James A. Engle & Dorcas Hall (Eds.), The Christian Mission Today (New York: Abingdon Press, 1960), p. 133.
  - <sup>67</sup> Rajaiah D. Paul. The Cross Over India (London: SCM Press LTD, 1952), p. 91.
  - <sup>68</sup> Neill. *Under Three Flags*. p. 105.
  - <sup>69</sup> Firth. Indian Church History. p. 208.
  - <sup>70</sup> Ibid. p. 80.
  - <sup>71</sup> Neill. Under Three Flags. p. 106.
  - <sup>72</sup> Hodge. Salute to India. p. 67.
  - <sup>73</sup> Webster, Assumptions about Indian Woman. p.36.
  - <sup>74</sup> Stephen Neill. Call to Mission. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), P. 62.
  - <sup>75</sup> Pramila Rajendran. The Urban Christian Wife: An Agent of Change. Unpublished Thesis, SAIACS, Bangalore, 1997.
  - <sup>76</sup> S. Vasantharaj Albert. A Portrait of India (Madras: CGAI, 1995), p. 2.
  - <sup>77</sup> <http://www.education.nic.in/htmlweb/adledu.htm>
  - <sup>78</sup> Pramila Rajendran, *Urban Christian Wife*: pp. 25- 29.
  - <sup>79</sup> Singh, India: p. 75.
  - <sup>80</sup> John Jesudason Cornelius, "Movements Towards Christ in India," from Fennell P. Turner and Frank Knight Sanders (Eds.), The Foreign Missions Convention at Washington 1925 (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1925), p. 83.
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- <sup>81</sup> Theerthan. Choice Before India: p. 17.
  - <sup>82</sup> Paul. The Cross over India. p. 89.

## Chapter - VIII

### CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION TO INDIA'S PEACE AND HARMONY

Philosophers in general agree that the *Summum Bonum* or the Supreme Values of human beings are 'Truth, Beauty, and Goodness.' Strangely, the word "peace" does not find a place in this scheme. Does it mean that peace is not a cherishable value? How are we to understand this omission? I believe that peace is the fortunate blend of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness. Peace could be quite misleading. Enforced silence, repression, and coercion cannot be taken as peace. The words like quietness or calmness also cannot explain peace. Peace is the fruit of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness. Truth, comprising justice and fairness, is harsh, uncompromising, and disturbing. However, truth alongwith beauty, which is sensitive and soft, and goodness, which is the expression of love and grace, can make peace in the real sense. This peace is what is sought after by all. Truth, Justice, Sensitivity, and Love are the sure ways to reach peace.



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There were times when peace was understood as a passive phenomenon and a result of withdrawal. However, this understanding has proved to be untenable to the realities of life. Accordingly, peace is increasingly understood in the context of people's life. Peace is understood as a dialectical process in which we see a synthesis of struggle and emancipation. Peace is realized in a flux of anxiety and hope. Peace is not a product but a process, which has to be promoted consciously at all times.

Peace is indispensable for human progress. There are two ways of approaching peace. Firstly, to interpret peace from the point of view of the powerful and the dominant people. The second approach is to understand peace from the perspectives of the poor and the vulnerable. The concept, the approach, and the solutions for peace differ between the above two categories of people. For the powerful and the dominant, peace is maintaining the status quo so that no change takes place. Conversely, for the poor and the vulnerable, peace includes dynamism and transformation through the process of justice. If policing is the approach for peace for the dominant people, spearheading struggles for change is the peace-action for the vulnerable. The poor and the vulnerable have to struggle in order to attain peace. The above clarification is a necessity as we intend to understand peace in the context of India, which is historically a class-, and caste-divided society. The contributions of the Christians to peace and harmony have to be understood against this background wherein we must be prepared to appreciate the efforts of Christians to establish peace by being catalysts for change and transformation. Thus, the main focus of this paper is to understand the role of Christians in peace-building from below by empowering the poor and the vulnerable.

## I. Peace Building in the Context of Cultural Injustice

The Gospel of Christ is based on love. Love knows no discrimination. Love promotes life even at the cost of self-annihilation. This is what we see in the Cross of Jesus Christ. In India, the biggest challenge to the Gospel comes not from other religions but from the dominant culture of India. The Hindu culture is vastly different from Hindu religion. The Hindu culture which is based on Varnashrama Dharma is a boon to the twice born 'Suvarnas' and a bane to the 'avarnas.' This culture divides people on the basis of birth and classifies them as high and low. It denies equality and justifies discrimination and deprivation with religious connotations. While Mahatma Gandhi acclaimed this Dharma as divinely ordained, Dr B.R.Ambedkar refuted this claim. On *Varnashrama Dharma*, Gandhiji said, "it is wrong to destroy caste because of the out-caste as it would be to destroy a body because of an ugly growth."<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, it is painful to listen to Dr B.R.Ambedkar when he says, "how can I call this land my own homeland, and this religion my own wherein we are treated worse than cats and dogs, wherein we cannot get water to drink?"<sup>2</sup> This is the agony of a large number of people of the Hindu culture even today. The caste oppression was felt even by the missionaries who hailed from outside India. C.F.Andrews, a friend of Mahatma Gandhi, came as a Cambridge teacher. He recalls an incident in a cricket field in Delhi where he was not able to drink water from the pot as he was considered an out-caste.<sup>3</sup>

At the erstwhile Madras Presidency, we see this clash in which Rajaji who, as the Chief Minister, introduced *Kula Kalvi* scheme or caste-based Education, reiterating the tenets of the Varnashrama Dharma of preserving education to the *suvarnas* and denying it to the *avarnas*. Rajaji closed down 6,000 schools in 1950

under this scheme which was agitated against by D.K. and D.M.K.<sup>4</sup> K.Kamaraj who later became the Chief Minister, opened the flood-gates of education to the poor. This is a simple illustration of how casteism determines political decisions. *Varnashrama Dharma*, which is manifested now by the existence of manifold castes is based on injustice which reinforces structural violence. It is, therefore, vividly known that caste system and peace cannot co-exist.

In the South, until middle of 19th century, the *avarnas* were expropriated of their wealth through enforcing a practice called *Uliyam*, labour without wage and a plundering tax system. People in the erstwhile State of Travancore, comprising places around Trivandrum upto Kanyakumari, had to pay a diabolic poll tax. The women were prohibited from covering their upper bodies.<sup>5</sup> The Gospel of Jesus became a natural source of empowerment to those oppressed people all over India. Thus, peace began as a dynamic force which reverberated from the proclamation that "God loves you." Christians accepted people irrespective of castes. Education, Health, and Development were opened to the out-castes. This empowering force of the Gospel is still able to instil hope into the hearts of the oppressed people. This humanizing aspect of Christianity is, in fact, an invaluable contribution of Christians towards peace in India.

## II. Building Harmony across Caste Divisions

Harmony stands for togetherness amidst diversity. It is a state of creative unity unfolding the variegated and mosaic nature of society. Creative unity is different from coerced uniformity. Harmony is made possible through an authentic acknowledgement of differences while actively affirming the oneness. Harmony rules out hierarchy and ritual exclusion. Like an orchestra in which different sounds make one music, harmony is

made by the existence of different groups which enjoy equality with one another.

The Indian society is highly regimented on the basis of castes. Caste basically reinforces distinction based on birth. Each caste is assigned a special duty (*Dharma*) and any violation is considered *adharma*, which is ruthlessly punished. Menial jobs are reserved to those in the lower rungs of the hierarchy. Apart from caste-duty, even food habits are regulated strictly. There are vegetarians and non-vegetarians. In such a situation harmony could not grow. "The more you exclude, the greater you are" is the logic of the caste system. In the past, mingling of people across the castes was not permitted. Even now, particularly in rural areas, caste integration is not favoured by the so-called upper caste groups.

In this context, Christianity has been playing the role for bringing harmony among communities. The notable steps taken by the Christian pioneers are "**Love Feasts**," "**Conventions**," and "**Ashrams**." Many other endeavours such as schools, hospitals, and cottage industries started by the Christian pioneers also facilitated inter-caste harmony. The American Madura Mission introduced Love Feasts in early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Accordingly, people were encouraged to give up caste and sectarian considerations and converge as one human family. People were encouraged to demonstrate openly their rejection of the caste by taking part in community eating which was named as "**Love Feast**."<sup>6</sup> This was indeed a revolutionary step towards establishing harmony.

Christian preachers used to conduct open-air meetings, which they called "**Conventions**." These conventions gave the opportunity for people to mingle and ensured freedom of movement. The Maramon Convention, being conducted since 1896 on the bank of



River Pamba in Kerala, is an illustrious effort to promote social harmony. Great Indian evangelists including Sadhu Sunder Singh preached in the Maramon Convention. Maramon Convention saw a great fillip under the leadership of Bishop Abraham Marthoma in 1947. Even now, it is a landmark event in Kerala, where people irrespective of caste, creed, and cultural differences participate in large number. Similarly, large conventions are organized all over the country by leading evangelists. The Conventions are so organized that they contain good music, singing, messages, and prayer for healing. As they are not conducted in a parochial manner, these conventions attract people of all backgrounds and promote social harmony.

Another laudable contribution of Christians to peace and harmony is the promotion of *Christian Ashrams*. Ashram is an important aspect of Hindu spiritual tradition. Several Christian leaders started Christian Ashrams imbibing the Ashram values from Hinduism. The inmates of Christian Ashrams subscribed to humanistic and progressive values, which radically differed from the social practices. Meditation, prayer, simple living, avoidance of luxurious life-style, common ownership of resources and service to the people around, formed part of Ashram life.

Several Ashrams came into being. In 1870, the Society of St John the Evangelist (Cowley Fathers) was established in Poona, and in 1881 the Orthodox Mission Brotherhood of the Epiphany was started in Calcutta. Christu Kula Ashram at Tirupattur in Tamilnadu was founded in 1921. The Christia Seva Sangha and Christa Prema Seva Sangha were founded near Poona in 1921 and 1934 respectively.<sup>7</sup> Ashrams in Sat Tal in the present Uttaranchal and the one in Kodaikanal and many other ashrams came into being.

The Orthodox and Marthoma Churches have also started several Ashrams. The one in Thadagam, near Coimbatore, is still active. The Christian Fellowship started by Dr A.K.Tharien as a young Doctor in a remote place near Dindugal called Oddanchatram is an exemplary one. It was started in 1954. Here religious piety is matched with service to the poor in the field of health and healing.<sup>8</sup> The primary contribution of the Ashrams is the spreading of the message of peace, love, and service through simple life. Ashrams definitely convey the message to the public that Christianity is a peace loving and non-aggressive religion, which is primarily concerned about human welfare.<sup>9</sup>

### **III. Forgiveness, a Pre-condition for Peace**

Christianity is in a unique position in India. It remains as a tiny minority religion despite evangelization ever since 52 A.D. This minority status of Christianity is interesting to observe because of its impact on the conduct of Indian Christians. Religious behaviour differs in accordance with the minority-majority status it occupies in a particular country. If a religion is a majority religion in a country, it could assume majoritarianism and could even justify at times violence against the powerless. Thus, Christianity being a minority religion in India, it exercises almost no majoritarian control. It is mostly at the receiving end.

The animosity against Christians has seen an upsurge in the recent years. Schemes with criminal intentions were meticulously executed against Christians which ranged from misinformation, branding, and physical attacks. Poor Christians were subjected to organize hatred. Their worship places were burnt down, even in New Delhi, the Church buildings were threatened with governmental denotification. Christian religious leaders like priests were murdered, paraded naked, and the consecrated religious Sisters were raped.

Graham Staines, who worked among the lepers, was burnt alive alongwith his two minor sons in Orissa in 1999.

Despite the above provocations, the victims and the kith and kin of those who were violated or killed announced forgiveness. In the midst of persecutions, the Christian community assembled regularly not to condemn the perpetrators but to pray for them so that they too could be saved.

The Christian community with its sizable presence in certain states of India could have resolved to avenge the atrocities. However, it chose not to do it but to forgive the culprits. This is in fact one of the greatest contributions of Christians to peace building because forgiveness is the precondition for lasting peace. Forgiving and pardoning the enemy have been the hallmark of Christians. St Thomas, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus attained martyrdom in Chennai around 72 A.D. Since then, several were killed for the sake of their faith in Jesus. Nobody condemned the culprits. This attitude and behaviour are congenial for the promotion of peace and harmony.

#### **IV. Christian Leaders as Peace Promoters**

Christians have proved to be harmless and lovers of peace. Therefore, rulers maintained cordial relationship with them. Long before India's Independence, the Muslim and European rulers cherished the peace-loving trait of the Indian Christians. Christians had a fascinating and peaceful relationship with the Moghul kings. Emperor Akbar (1542 - 1605) invited the Jesuit fathers from Goa to his palace in Agra. He allowed them to build churches in the city. The Christians held the Emperor in high esteem. It is said that Akbar the Great and his son Jehangir used to participate in the celebrations of Christian festivals with

a great jubilation. On Christmas morning, Akbar used to come to the Church with his nobles to see the decorations and the crib. When the Emperor entered the Church on the Christmas Day, he was conducted to the Church like a Bishop to the chiming of bells and singing of hymns. On the Christmas night, the Christians enacted the drama of Christ's birth. The great Emperor used to grace the occasion and Christians showered rose petals on the emperor at the end of the play.<sup>10</sup> This relationship continued even after the time of Akbar.

Christian Frederick Schwartz, a missionary who lived in Tranquebar in Tamilnadu from 1750, was not only loved by the poor people but respected and trusted by the Hindu and Muslim kings. Not many would know that Schwartz was trusted so much by Tolossi Raja, the King of Tanjore that he entrusted him with the responsibility of bringing up his adopted minor son Serfojee. Schwartz honoured this request of the dying king made in 1787 and ensured Serfojee's safety from the king's brother Ramasami who usurped the throne and declared him King with the name "Ameer Singh." Schwartz brought the young prince Serfojee from Tanjore to Madras as he felt that it was not safe for the prince to be in Tanjore. When Serfojee attained the age, Schwartz successfully raised him to the throne.

This talks volumes about the integrity of Christians and their sense of honesty even while handling power. Schwartz was also requested by the British to be their messenger to Hyder Ali which he did with great decorum. Hyder Ali had the following words to the Britishers about Schwartz "if you wish me listen to your proposals, send to me the Missionary of whose character I hear so much from everyone: him I will receive and trust."<sup>11</sup> This tradition of keeping the highest order of integrity in public life is found even today among Christian leaders.



The services of Christians, in times of national calamity and movements of disaster are well-known. The institutions and the galaxy of names of prominent Christian leaders who render yeomen services to fellow Indians in times of strife and tribulations is inexhaustible. The role of YMCA in peace building cannot be ignored. When the new Indian nation experienced the trauma of partition with the break out of the Hindu-Muslim riots in the Indo-Pak borders, the YMCA responded to the call given by national leaders including Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. In Delhi, Mr T.D.Santwan the then General Secretary of YMCA mobilized young Christians to receive the wounded, treat them and to console them with love.

Numerous Christian leaders played remarkable role even at the national level. Banerjee who was the first President of Indian National Congress in 1879 was a Bengal Christian. Dr.H.C.Mukerji, a good Christian was the Vice-President of the Constituent Assembly before he became the Governor of Bengal. Fr Jerome D'Souza, former Principal of Loyola College, Chennai, who by raising above partisan considerations advocated that Christians need not be granted any special status in comparison to the Hindus in the Constitution of India. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and her brother Maharaj Singh were the disciples of Gandhiji. Dr K.C.Kumarappa who shaped the economic policies of Gandhiji was a Christian who in his later years settled in an Ashram in T.Kallupatti near Madurai.

K.T.Paul from Salem, was a Christian leader during the Independence struggle. He, as the General Secretary of YMCA, played a vital role as a peacemaker between Indian leaders and the British administrators. K.T.Paul was a nationalist but wished the transfer of power from the British to take place in a peaceful atmosphere. He got the trust of Gandhiji as well as Lord Irwin, the Viceroy.

K.T.Paul attended the first Round Table Conference held in London in 1930. Gandhiji had the following to say about him: "I had the privilege of knowing Mr K.T.Paul. The nearer I came to him, the more I respected him. His Christianity appeared to me to be broad and tolerant. It not only did not interfere with his being a thorough nationalist: on the contrary, in his case, it seems to have deepened his nationalism."<sup>12</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Christianity in India has been a peace-loving and peace-promoting community. Christian leaders, even in the face of threats, have displayed restraint and advocated peace and friendship. The National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) led by Bp Mar Kurilos had met the RSS Chief in Nagpur and expressed the preparedness of the Church for dialogue. When Christians in the Dang district of Gujarat were persecuted, Christian leaders like Bp Ezra Sargunam stood in solidarity with the vulnerable Christians and averted violence from the vested interests. Even in such times of trials, Christians did not condemn anyone but prayed and fasted for God's love and greater peace. Peace makers qualify to be the children of God, as Jesus said, "Blessed are the peace makers, for they shall be the sons(daughters) of God."

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## **Chapter - IX**

### **CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION TO WOMEN'S ISSUES IN INDIA**

#### **- The Unique Contribution of Amy Carmichael**

During the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Protestant missionaries, with the support of allies in India and England and prompted by the knowledge and awareness they gained through practical experience in their mission fields, took the initiative to advocate a number of reforms in the traditional Indian society.<sup>1</sup> Though the "Female Mission" had been the distinct sphere of Western women missionaries who undertook "Woman's Work for Woman," the critical role of Indian women in the missionary project was recognized. In evangelical rhetoric, Indian women were identified and represented as the greatest upholders of heathenism and its most pitiable victims – as also the greatest hope for Christianity.<sup>2</sup> Missionaries drew attention to the status of women in India, criticizing customs such as sati, female infanticide, child marriage, enforced widowhood and the denial of formal education to women. Women



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were first put on the agenda of Indian social reform by Christian missionaries.<sup>3</sup> Education, probably the most important form of contact with Indian women, was seen as a powerful instrument in the civilizing and Christianizing mission.

The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw an expansion of the kind of work undertaken by women in missions as single women missionaries, increasingly accepted in overseas missions, strengthened the female mission.<sup>4</sup> This article focuses on the unique contribution of a single British woman missionary pioneer, Amy Carmichael, whose experience in her chosen mission field – rural South India –aroused deep concern about the women and children of India, in particular, “temple women and children” within the traditional, well-entrenched *devadasi* system.<sup>5</sup> The scope of the article is limited to her pioneering engagement with this system of temple women as she became increasingly aware of the “traffic” in girls to Hindu temples that ensured the continuance of the system. A sense of divine commission spurred her on to make bold and path-breaking attempts to “rescue” “Temple Children”<sup>6</sup> and destroy what she could only see as a deadly parasite on the “True India,” her adoptive home.

### **Revelations in the Mission Field**

Born in Northern Ireland in 1867, Amy Beatrice Carmichael arrived in India in 1895 eager to fulfil her missionary aspirations. Bold and adventurous by nature, she was the product of a large happy Christian family that had given her a deep practical Christian faith, early spiritual experiences that brought revelations of work that “abides” in the eyes of God, and the Keswick Movement that strengthened her sense of deep conviction in her calling as an instrument of her divine Lord’s will. In rural Tirunelveli where she moved in 1896, Amy gathered around her a band of highly committed

young women converts who formed a Woman's Band that undertook arduous itinerating evangelistic tours that brought her in touch with women and children of different castes and classes.

"Things as They Are," Amy's first "battle-book"<sup>7</sup> that records her early experiences and impressions from her new mission field, identifies women and children as "the most needy."<sup>8</sup> She turns again and again in anguish to the Temple women and children whom she encountered. Significantly, she would not condemn either the temple women, "poor slaves of the Brahmans," or girls, "trained to the terrible life,"<sup>9</sup> to which they were all "doomed by the law of the Hindu religion."<sup>10</sup> Reserving condemnation for "those responsible for the creation of the Temple woman," she wrote, "let us deal gently with the mishandled flower."<sup>11</sup> Significantly also, she would not malign India. She could not see this iniquitous system as "India or Indian, in essence or development," but like a "parasite," as something "alien to the land," but "so became a part of it that nothing but the touch of God will ever get it out".<sup>12</sup> "But," as Amy wrote, "the more India becomes home, the more the longing burns within one that this land should be purified . . . "<sup>13</sup>

### Entering the Fray

It was not long before Amy was drawn to the task. On 6 March 1901, later referred to as Foundation Day, seven-year-old Preena, the first temple child, escaped from the house of a temple woman, taking refuge in the mission bungalow at Pannaivilai the next day. The child told uninhibited stories that "darkened the sunlight"<sup>14</sup> for Amy and "constrained" her to gather more facts about what seemed to be a secret traffic in children to perpetuate the institution of temple women. Amy's sense of divine commission to "search for the little lost lambs" "with the Good Shepherd"<sup>15</sup> and to "go forth with the

Owner Himself" to claim "the little Lotus buds" that were "His own possession,"<sup>16</sup> grew.

The campaign launched in the late nineteenth century by reformers including missionaries against the employment of nautch or dancing girls, usually devadasis, at public and private functions, had drawn attention to the devadasi system,<sup>17</sup> but the traffic in children that fed the system had remained a secret. For years, Amy and her devoted Indian workers searched in vain during itinerating tours for the sources from which the children who were to be dedicated to temples were drawn. Information and children including babies who were to be dedicated or sold for temple service came to them through various channels including friends, Indian pastors, mission workers, and Christian nurses. She researched the problem meticulously, tapping missionary sources – few were even aware of temple children – government officials, newspapers, and Indians, and recorded her findings. She also recorded accounts of the dramatic moments, risks and threats that the work entailed and her frustration at the ineffectiveness of the law of the land to protect the children.

By 1904, there were seventeen children to be cared for, at least six of them Temple children. While Amy and her co-workers rejoiced in the visible changes in the children who blossomed in their care, the practical demands of a growing family of children that included girl converts to Christianity were tremendous, and "everything" had to "go down before the claims of the children . . . every missionary call had to be subordinated to their new demands."<sup>18</sup> In 1901, a settled home was established in Dohnavur, where the family developed on the lines of an Indian family in accordance with the wishes of Amy who was referred to as *Amma* (Mother). In 1918, Amy struck further at the *devadasi* system as

she began to also take in boys who were used as temple musicians and in the cinema industry. To train the children rescued from exploitative situations, Amy developed a scheme of education with the idea of "entire consecration" as its foundation. Farms and workshops with activities ranging from weaving to tailoring were set up to cater to the family's needs and as bases for training for the children. In 1927, for legal purposes, the community of Dohnavur was formed into the Dohnavur Fellowship. Its object was stated thus:

To save children in moral danger; to train them to serve others . . . to do anything that may be shown to be the will of our Heavenly Father and, in order to make His love known, especially to the people of India.<sup>19</sup>

### **Conclusion**

In the 1930s, the introduction in the Madras Legislative Council of the Devadasi Abolition Bill by Dr Muthulakshmi Reddy of the Women's India Association triggered off further debate on the devadasi system. The bill was passed with modifications only in 1947 as the Madras Devadasis (Prevention of Dedication) Act. Confined due to failing health in 1931 and an invalid for the last twenty years of her life, through these years Amy Carmichael remained in the home she had built for her temple children and young converts, the central figure of the Dohnavur family she had established.



**End Notes:**

- <sup>1</sup> G.A. Oddie. Social Protest in India. British Protestant Missionaries and Social Reforms, 1850-1900. (New Delhi: Manohar, 1979) p.1.
- <sup>2</sup> See Helen McCulloch. "Sex, Gender, and Christian Conversion in Nineteenth Century South India " in Lynette Olson, ed., Religious Change, Conversion and Culture , (Sydney; Sydney Studies, 1996) pp. 155-156 and 166-168.
- <sup>3</sup> Aparna Basu. "Mary Ann Cooke to Mother Teresa: Christian Missionary Women and the Indian Response" in Fiona Bowie, Deborah Kirkwood and Shirley Ardener, eds., Women and Missions: Past and Present. Anthropological and Historical Perceptions, (Oxford; Berg, 1993), p.189.
- <sup>4</sup> McCulloch. "Sex, Gender and Christian Conversion." p.159.
- <sup>5</sup> "Devadasi" literally means "at the feet of the god" or "slave of god." It was a tradition, considered meritorious to dedicate young girls, usually of a high caste, to the temple as devadasis. Trained in various arts such as singing and dancing, they performed ritual duties. Being "married" symbolically to the god, ruled out the possibility of marriage to a man, and they were available for use sexually by the patrons of the temple. To ensure a hereditary right over their source of income, devadasis had to dedicate a minor female heir to the temple. Hence 'temple women' sought out and even bought suitable young girls whom they adopted and trained, if they did not produce an

eligible heir. The men of the community served as temple musicians. For more details, see Amrit Srinivasan, "Reform and Revival: The Devadasi and Her Dance", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.XX, No.44, Nov.2, 1985, pp.1869-1876.

<sup>6</sup> Carmichael explained her use of this term that referred to "children dedicated to gods, or in danger of being so dedicated." Amy Wilson-Carmichael, Lotus Buds, London: Morgan and Scott Ltd., 1912, p.248.

<sup>7</sup> Written from the "Battle Field", this was her most controversial book. It could not be published until 1903 though it was written a few years earlier. Determined not to change one word to please anybody, it created an uproar in missionary circles but was reprinted six times by 1906.

<sup>8</sup> Amy Wilson Carmichael, Things As They Are: Mission Work in Southern India. (New York: Young People's Missionary Movement, 1906) p. 93.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* p. 192.

<sup>11</sup> Carmichael. Lotus Buds, p.282.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.* pp. 87-88.

<sup>13</sup> Amy Wilson Carmichael, Overweights of Joy, London: Morgan and Scott, 1908, p.72.

<sup>14</sup> Amy Carmichael. (Gold Cord: The Story of a Fellowship, (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1947), p. 22.

- <sup>15</sup> Carmichael. Overweights of Joy, p. 238.
- <sup>16</sup> Carmichael. Lotus Buds. p.4.
- <sup>17</sup> See Amrit Srinivasan. "Reform and Revival,"p. 1873;  
G A Oddie, Social Protest in India. pp.102-109.
- <sup>18</sup> Carmichael. Gold Cord. p.40.
- <sup>19</sup> See Frank Houghton. Amy Carmichael of Dohnavur.  
(Dohnavur: The Dohnavur Fellowship, 1993) p.363.

## **Chapter - X**

# **CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION TO NATION BUILDING BY INDIAN CHRISTIAN WOMEN**

### **The Indian Women's Predicament**

The defeat of India in the hands of the British in the nineteenth century was attributed to the weakness inherent in the Indian culture - that of its treatment of women. Geraldine Forbes asserts that the early nineteenth century reformers saw women's empowerment and regeneration as the key to the progress and autonomy of the nation as a whole.<sup>1</sup> Major issues that stemmed from the practice of female infanticide, child marriage, enforced widowhood, and religious prostitution were the focus of reform. Women played a dual role as victims and victimizers in that they suffered, allowed and enforced discriminatory practices in their households due to powerlessness, superstition, and fear of breaking caste. A brief overview of the nature of women's issues will aid in understanding the dynamics of reform in this area.

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### **The problem of enforced widowhood**

The institution of child marriage was widespread in nineteenth century India with child brides being married off anywhere from six months of age onwards and sent to live with their husbands at the onset of puberty. It was not uncommon for these children to survive their husbands who were often far advanced in years and subsequently suffer the debilitating consequences that enforced widowhood brought with it - so much that widowhood was even termed, 'cold sati'. The predicament of these child widows or the problems that child marriages caused was a chief area of concern with the reformers.

Uma Chakravarti defines widowhood as, "a state of social death" and further notes that "the chaste woman would cease to exist at the death of her husband by joining her husband on the funeral pyre but if she did not become a sati she came to be institutionally marginalized: while she was physically alive, she was socially dead".<sup>2</sup> Dr. Bhandarkar, ex-vice chancellor of Bombay University commented on child-marriage and subsequent widowhood thus,

The medical men whom I have consulted say that the results are due to the marriages being ill assorted; ie., to the great inequality between the ages of the girl and of the strong and vigorous man. I do not know how else to characterize these cases except as cases of human sacrifice.<sup>3</sup>

The number of widows in India according to a census report in 1891 was 23,000,000 and of this number many were mere girls and children.<sup>4</sup> A widow could still survive with dignity if she had sons but in the context where she did not, as was often the case among the child widows, her existence was marked with untold misery. With her head cruelly tonsured on a periodic basis,

deprived of all her ornaments, given only a coarse maroon or white saree to wear, a diet that was restricted to one meal a day without spices or oily substances, frequent fasts, and relegated to sleeping on cold floors, she became the symbol of inauspiciousness and curse.<sup>5</sup> Charged with the sin of her husband's death, she was forced to undergo several changes in appearance and way of life that served to erase her identity as 'wife' from public view.

### **Child Marriages and the Age of Consent Controversy**

One of the reasons for the huge number of widows was that of the practice of child marriages. It was common for child brides to be given in marriage to much older men and the disparity in age left the child bride a widow very soon. Some nationalist reformers led by Mahadev Ranade (1842-1901) and Behramji Malabari (1853-1912) felt that securing the consent of the bride on both occasions of marriage and consummation of marriage would place a check on the increasing number of widows and other atrocities committed against women. This move to raise the age of marriage of young brides and the age of consummation of marriage led to the Age of Consent controversy of 1891. Nationalist reformers who raised the issue of consent sought to protect the childhood of these girls on the grounds that they needed to reach womanhood and physical maturity before they could enter married life. However, not all of Indian society deemed it necessary to have a woman's opinion on matters that concerned her conjugal relations. A woman's opinion was considered unreliable as it was expected to be tainted by waywardness and unrestrained sexual passion. Under this yoke of inhibited silence, women were considered ineligible to participate equally in marital or other decisions made on their behalf.<sup>6</sup> Conservative reformers led by Lokmanyu Bala Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920) raised a cry against foreign

intervention in the affairs of women and stressed on the religious sanction that child marriages had within the social and religious fabric of the nation. They also insisted that the conflict was not simply over the rights of women but over the legitimacy of a foreign power to make decisions on behalf of Indian religions when the colonizers had only a limited exposure to those belief systems. After a period of struggle and deliberations the British government adjudicated in favor of the conservative reformers and raised the age of consent from ten to twelve years of age.<sup>7</sup>

### **The Purdah System**

In addition to child marriages and enforced widowhood, the *purdah* system was another practice that immobilized women. Although Islam diligently practiced the *purdah* system it also prevailed among the Hindu population in Northern India. Indian literature records instances of this practice among upper caste families in ancient India.<sup>8</sup> *Purdah* had a dual purpose: it served to reign in and control female sexuality and also protect women from men outside of the household.<sup>9</sup> *Purdah* was more strictly followed in North India than in the South and the presence of the *Zenana* validated the institution of *purdah*. The *Zenana* referred to the cloistered inner spaces of a household where women lived and moved all their lives. Although this seclusion had helped protect women from invaders it resulted in women suffering from diseases such as tuberculosis simply because they never saw the light of the sun for days together. By cutting their access to the outside world—even to the immediate world outside their doorstep, male householders sought to establish the chastity of their women. On the notions of chastity associated with *purdah*, Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) is known to have remarked, "Chastity is not a hot house growth. It cannot be superimposed. It cannot be

protected by the surrounding walls of the *Purdah*".<sup>10</sup> Regardless of such efforts and sentiments from reformers like Gandhi who strove to provide women with mobility to work on a national, social and political level, the *purdah* system continued to have its support among many sections of society.

### **Religious Prostitution and Female Infanticide**

Another social practice that raised concern among nationalist reformers was that of regulated prostitution. In Maharashtra, young girls called *Muralis* were consecrated to a deity known as the Khandoba when parents found it financially and socially challenging to bring up the female child. Besides performing certain functions in the temples, they were also required to perform sexual favors for the priests and those devotees who sought to worship at the temple.<sup>11</sup> *Muralis* usually hailed from the lower Kunbis, Mahars and Mang castes and oftentimes upper castes devotees bought these young lower caste girls from their parents or relatives to offer them up to the deities as an act of worship. A similar practice was found in the South where *Devadasis* or dancers who were legally the property of the temple priests, performed dances and functioned as prostitutes. It is said that there were about 11,573 *Devadasis* in the Madras Presidency in 1900.<sup>12</sup>

Under such conditions, it was not rare for young women to have children out of wedlock. Even if she had children within the parameters of marriage, there were stringent conditions that governed the survival of the newborn based on the sex of the child. Sons were much sought after and female infants abhorred. Female infants suffered the risk of being killed at birth or shortly thereafter due to the threat of economic liability that they posed. Others were offered up as a sacrifice at the Ganges or at various other pilgrimage centers.<sup>13</sup> The numbers



of female children dwindled rapidly. Several instances have been noted where whole villages have had only a handful of surviving female children in comparison with the hundreds of male children. Although widely spread in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan and Gujarat, this practice of female infanticide was found in other parts of the country as well.<sup>14</sup>

Forced to sacrifice identity, status, and voice on the altar of political insurgence, religious conflict, and social struggle, Indian women remained long enslaved under superimposed notions of usefulness and possession. Fashionably termed the 'women question', the aforementioned issues of women's rights and the struggle for the emancipation of women soon made its way into the tabloids of reform during the colonial years and after. The movement towards the liberation of women started out independent of the political movement but by late nineteenth century was modified and integrated within the interests of the nationalist movement.<sup>15</sup> Both colonial and national discourses grappled long and hard over the question of the Indian woman's identity, role, and status in society. An integral factor in this atmosphere of intense reform and social activity was the presence and work of Christian missionaries. Christian mission played a crucial role as many Indian men and women joined forces to combat the mores of society. Their collaborative and sometimes contradictory efforts resulted in drawing women out of the confines of the home and into the public nationalist arena. Whether sponsored by colonizers or driven by nationalists, reform in this area had repercussions on the Indian woman's freedom of choice, mobility, and right to equality. This study attempts to research the nature of reform effected through the lives and ministries of Indian Christian women during that period.

**Indian Christian women and their role in women's reform**

Western Christian mission by the end of the nineteenth century saw a proliferation of Western women missionaries in the colonies whose work towards the emancipation of indigenous women soon grew by leaps and bounds to compete for a central place in foreign (overseas) missions. Jane Haggis avers that, "the white woman's burden to bring civilized femininity to their 'other' sister" became the crux of Western women's missionary enterprise at that time.<sup>16</sup> Records maintained by nineteenth century missionaries often projected the degradation suffered by women in indigenous societies and their need for liberation in order to validate missionary presence and work in those cultures. It has also been argued that indigenous Indian women were targets of reform and conversion and subsequently viewed as key instruments in the 'civilizing' of that culture and the conversion of others in the community.<sup>17</sup> A huge emphasis was laid on regulating the domestic sphere of Indian women thereby aiming to bring about conformity to Victorian values and way of life. Marriage, husband-worship, and motherhood which were the chief levels of usefulness traditionally attributed to indigenous womanhood were modified to incorporate newer responsibilities of missionary 'work'.<sup>18</sup> Ruth Tucker explains that the rise of female missionaries and the changes they ushered in the existing social structures, "offered [indigenous]women freedom and opportunity for public service that was denied them in other religions".<sup>19</sup> This new role of missionary 'work' primarily extended into the areas of education, medicine, and social work endeavoring to restore a new meaning into the existing self-perceptions of the Indian woman on her identity and role in society.

Although Western Christian mission had a 'civilizing agenda' in mind for Indian Christian women, it was countered by several other national, political and colonial

forces that were at play in the social arena. Eliza Kent argues that the 'civilizing' mission of Western mission and the adoption of Western forms of liberation did not easily displace long established indigenous cultural practices or beliefs.<sup>20</sup> Indigenous Christian women workers as in the case of their non-Christian counterparts helped shape the future and identity of independent India within the framework of Indian culture, traditions and values. The approach of indigenous Christian women to social reform was marked by their allegiance to Christ, an adherence to Christian beliefs and teaching, and a unique understanding of the social conditions of the Indian society that was an intrinsic character of their Indian identity.

There were seven hundred foreign female missionaries and more than three thousand indigenous women missionaries in India by the year 1890.<sup>21</sup> While a majority of indigenous Christian women functioned as Bible women and missionary aides in schools and hospitals, there were a few among them such as Pandita Ramabai, Lilavathi Singh, and Sundarabai Pawar who set the trend for indigenous Christian women's leadership in the field of reform for women.<sup>22</sup> Through their contribution in the areas of education, legislation, medicine and literature they attempted to address various social issues that hindered the emancipation of Indian women. Sakhi Athyal points out that these indigenous Christian women through their lives and ministries served as 'role models' to other Indian women.<sup>23</sup>

In addition to individual reformers such as the above, there were numerous other men and women who worked through various organizations for the upliftment of women. Ultimately, it may be said that the overall thrust towards women's reform in India (as in the specific case of women's education) gathered momentum through the coexisting efforts of Indian nationalist reformers and

Western and indigenous Christian missionaries.<sup>24</sup> It was an age of collaboration and new partnerships.

### **Some Contributions of Indian Christian Women to Mission and Nation Building**

Within the above context of reform activities and social needs, Indian Christian women attempted to perform several functions that would benefit their communities. Sakhi Athyal provides an extensive list of a number of Indian Christian women who had served both Indian men and women through various pioneering work. Ponnammal, Mural and Pearl who assisted Amy Carmichael in her ministry work, Hilda Lazarus and Mary Verghese from the Vellore Medical College, and Lilavathi Singh are a few among many.<sup>25</sup> In the area of medical missions, both Hilda Lazarus and Mary Verghese stand in the forefront for their contributions through their work at the renowned Vellore Medical College in Vellore. The former who held seven medical degrees and served as an army medical officer provided exemplary administrative leadership to the institution in the place of Dr. Ida Scudder. Mary Verghese on the other hand concentrated her work among patients afflicted with leprosy and developed the "island artery flap" surgical procedure that benefited those whose faces had been disfigured.<sup>26</sup>

Another trendsetting Christian woman reformer was Krupabai Sathianadhan (1862-1894), a first generation Brahmin convert to Christianity, known for being the first Indian woman to write an autobiographical novel in English. Sathianadhan's contribution to reform was manifold. In 1880, she became the first Indian woman to seek medical studies in India by enrolling for a degree in medicine at the Madras Medical School. Ill health prevented her from completing her course and she reverted her interests to writing and raising awareness through her novels.<sup>27</sup> Her novel



*Saguna* (1895) a multigenerational story that dealt with the lives of two women, is considered to be "an invaluable social document of its times". She also wrote *Kamala*, and *A Story of Hindu Life and Miscellaneous Writings of Krupabai Sathianadhan*.<sup>28</sup> In addition to her novels she penned numerous articles for newspapers and magazines before her death in 1894. She was only thirty two.

In addition to medical work, Christian women have also been involved in reform through legislation. Chief among those who served in this area was Cornelia Sorabji (1870-1954). Sorabji who was a Parsi Christian served as barrister in Calcutta and authored several books on the subject of the Indian women. She supposedly did not associate her work and vision with Gandhi or the other nationalists but urged women to stay focused on social reform after her predecessors Pandita Ramabai, Ramabai Ranade (managed the Seva Sadan in Poona in 1908), Rukhmabai, and her own mother Francina Sorabji.<sup>29</sup> She served as a special legal adviser (1904-1923) and worked to protect the rights of women property holders who lived in purdah and approximately six hundred women benefited from her services. Acclaimed as the first female barrister 'in the English speaking world' she was awarded the nation's highest *Kaiser-e-Hind* medal for her service to women in 1922. Her works include, *India Calling* (1934) and *India Recalled* (1936), both being self-introspective works of her life, *Love and Life Behind Purdah* (1901), *Sun Babies* (1904), *Indian Tales of the Great Ones* (1916), *The Purdanashin* (1917), and *Therefore* (1924) and she helped edit Queen Mary's *Book for India* (1943).<sup>30</sup>

One of the most popular areas of reform was in the field of education. In 1882, Pandita Ramabai (1858-1922) appeared before the Hunter's Commission and testified of the need for female school teachers and inspectors to

monitor and promote women's education in Indian schools. She garnered support for the provision of female doctors to serve the scores of medically unfit Indian women who refused to be treated by male physicians for gynecological ailments. The National Association for Supplying Female Medical Aid to Women of India or the Countess Dufferin Fund was formed in response to her suggestions.<sup>31</sup> Ramabai also founded the Sharada Sadan a school for upper caste Hindu widows, and other upper caste women that aimed at imparting education and vocational training to its members. In 1899 the Sharada Sadan moved to Kedgaon and was renamed the Mukthi Mission. Mukthi had about 2000 inhabitants, and extended the services of the Sadan to women from various castes and backgrounds. It was also here that Ramabai along with her helpers rescued numerous women who were victims of famine, widowhood and oppression. Similar to the Sadan, Mukthi followed a process of education and training which led to self-reliance.<sup>32</sup> Ramabai was awarded the prestigious *Kaiser-e-Hind* medal in 1919 as a recognition of her services to the women of India.

Sundarabai Pawar was another Christian woman who dedicated her life to serving oppressed women when she was barely twenty years old. Education and social work was her mode of ministry. She battled the growing consumption of opium by women by educating the masses through public lectures.<sup>33</sup> Along with this work she also helped Ramabai in the running of the Sharada Sadan in the first seven years of its operation. Later, she devoted her attention to the growth of *zenana* training schools that threw its doors open to destitute women who were interested in becoming trained Bible women to complement the work of the church in Maharashtra.<sup>34</sup>

Francina Sorabji, who helped Ramabai set up her organization for Hindu widows was well known for her influence in the field of education. Francina founded the unique "feeder schools" which were open to both male and female students of all ethnicities.<sup>35</sup> The medium of education was in the vernacular although English was taught as second language. Free education for the poor was provided through additional schools for the poor - one for the Hindus and another for Muslims. Francina's daughters were also deeply involved in social work among women. Susie Sorabji who inherited her mother's interest in fostering education went on to establish St. Helena's in Poona which accommodated a unique inter-racial population of students. In addition, she also founded St. John's school for the poor. Francina's other daughter was Cornelia Sorabji who was mentioned earlier on in this chapter.<sup>36</sup>

The lives and ministries of the above women are but a few examples of indigenous Christian women who empowered with the power of the Holy Spirit used their intellect and resources to reach out and challenge existing institutions of womanhood. These examples provide a brief glimpse into the breadth and depth of reform that was spreading throughout the land. While there were undoubtedly numerous other appreciable attempts and lives that cannot be recounted for lack of documentation and limitations of space, the stories of the above women only serve to highlight the fact that Indian Christian women were active participants in the movement to alleviate the social status of women. Their unique methods and visions attempted to carve a way to liberate, educate and empower the oppressed. In reaching out they were building womanhood from within not without, as insiders and not as onlookers, lending the process both historical veracity and authenticity.

## **Challenges to indigenous Christian women's work in India**

Women face many challenges in the Indian church today. A major challenge that came the way of the Indian church was the Western conception of the 'mission of domesticity'. The Western missionary notion of the Indian woman's role and capacity did not fully recognize the social, intellectual and cultural resources that she embodied. By recruiting women to serve within their households with the intention of modernizing and educating the members of their immediate family or by giving them the position of missionary assistants, Western Christian mission only partially acknowledged the potential of Indian Christian women on a national, political and social level.

The few Indian Christian women who managed to break the mold and set the trend for indigenous agency and leadership encountered yet another challenge through the patriarchal limitations enforced by Christian mission on their mobility and areas of service. Not only was that a major hurdle but a similar and parallel limitation was imposed upon these women by other coexisting faiths through the expectations and roles that they ascribed to womanhood within their religious beliefs. Stanley Samartha, calls this the 'double bondage'-one which combines the limitations imposed upon women through a patriarchal interpretation of the Bible along side the interpretations of womanhood by other religions that together formed the Indian religious landscape.<sup>37</sup> According to Samartha, the religions that coexisted in India long before the advent of Christianity had ample opportunity to be involved in the shaping of the female identity for a much longer period of time than Christianity. Therefore, the encounter with the Christian faith in such an inter-religious context needs to take into account the historical presence of other existing religions



and the religious dynamic that governs their beliefs.<sup>38</sup> Any attempt to address women's issues in India today must consider the overall context in order to generate a meaningful solution to the predicament posed by various social barriers that continue to hinder the social emancipation of women.

### **Conclusion**

It must be noted that many Indian Christian women worked for the emancipation of women within their homes and extended families. The narrow social limitations imposed upon a woman's behavior, range of influence, and role in society made it difficult for women to effect reform. However, some women like Pandita Ramabai, the Sorabji siblings, and Sundarabai Pawar were able to break the tight circle of social stringency and went on to blaze trails in the fields of education, medicine, law, and literature. All of the above women fought fierce battles against an onslaught of colonial and patriarchal designs, caste-based hegemonic differentiation, religious discrimination, and persecution. Their lives spun narratives of Christian compassion that merged with their patriotic fervor to usher in change in the lives of their compatriots and those of future generations.

Colonial and Indian nationalist discourses attempted to answer the 'woman question' but their efforts sometimes collided with meaningful reform. Lack of a coordinated effort to stamp out atrocities committed against women, along with diverse motives governing the call for modernization tended to spawn disagreements over the direction of reform. Although women's issues served as the launching pad for several major reform movements it was later abruptly divorced from the currents of mainstream reform activities. These women among many others strove to empower reform efforts with the transformation that comes only when

the Gospel is applied in a meaningful manner within a context. In their work the Gospel proved to be the link that pointed the innumerable issues and questions to the answer. For those like Ramabai who persisted in carving an indigenous and yet a common sisterhood identity based on the Gospel, transformation happened. It is possible that the issues were not dealt with on the scale it deserved to be, and imperfections could be found in their appropriation and use of the Christian experience to generate reform but it still remains that their contributions were noteworthy and reflected a growing trend in women's leadership in Indian Christian mission.

It is thus important to read the struggle for women's emancipation taking into account a consolidated picture of Christian missionary work amidst the nationalist, religious, and social discourses that flooded the scene. Some currents of change prevailed over others. Together, they provided a place for women to voice their concerns, to experiment and shape their destinies. The 'woman question' was definitely marginalized during this period but very valid attempts were made to set the ball rolling. These attempts may escape notice in an ocean of reform but their authenticity and collaborative power cannot be undermined even as they gave women such as Ramabai a thriving atmosphere of dialogue, reform, and opportunity.

It is not an easy task to narrate the story of an Indian Christian woman. Nothing is known of Mary Magdalene's continued role and ministry beyond her point of contact with the resurrected Christ. It may well be speculated that she labored faithfully under the direct commission. In like manner, Indian Christian women have over centuries worked ceaselessly within their territories to spread the love of Christ. Each woman's contribution (seen or unseen) is a seed sown in the ground that is India and the spectacular nature of each

woman's story will only be fully revealed in the glory of the coming Christ.

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## Chapter - XI

### CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION TO Indian Languages, Literature and Culture: A Brief Overview

Dr Rochunga Pudaite is from the Hmar tribe in southern Manipur of North East India. His story is an exciting history of the impact of Bible translation on the socio-cultural and economic development of an 'untouchable' tribal community in India. He writes his story as *Afterword* to Vishal Mangalwadi's book, *The Quest for Freedom and Dignity*: "My tribe in southern Manipur did not treat others as untouchables. We were headhunters until two generations ago. No wonder even the British avoided us - let alone, other tribes and castes. As a matter of fact, my tribe – the Hmars - were not even listed as a tribe by the Government of India, until I appealed directly to our Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru."<sup>1</sup>

According to Pudaite, in 1909, a mail runner brought a copy of the *Gospel of John* (a book from the New Testament of the Bible) to the Hmars. No one in the

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village knew how to read, in any case the book was written in another language, Lushai. When a traveller passed by, the Chief got him to read the book. No one understood the meaning but on the back page they found the address of the sender. The Chief sent messengers to bring him to the village to explain the book's message. As a result of his short visit, four teenagers, including a young man named Chawnga, became followers of Jesus Christ. They learned to read the Lushai language to memorise the *Gospel of John*. They shared the Gospel with their people, but their witness was hampered because they had no Bible in their own language.

### **Tiger-infested Forests**

Therefore, Chawnga decided to send his ten-year old son, Rochunga Pudiate, to the nearest upper primary school – a 96 mile walk through dense forests infested with tigers, bears, pythons, and wild elephants. Like all parents, he too wanted his son to get a job and provide for his parents in their old age. But he knew that their jungle had no jobs to offer. Chawnga recognised that the primary difference between the Hmars and the missionary was the Bible. So he concluded that the greatest thing he could do for his people was to ask his son to translate the Bible into their language.

After his studies, Rochunga travelled to Scotland to learn the Bible's original languages and start translating the Bible into the Hmar language. From Scotland he went to America to complete his theological training and Bible translation. Finally, in 1958, Rochunga returned to India with a complete Hmar New Testament translated from the original languages. It was edited and improved with others' help and then published in 1960. It became an instant best seller.

After three months at home, Rochunga travelled through the hills of Manipur, Mizoram, and Assam to

learn that there was only one government school among the Hmar villages of the Manipur hills. His people wanted to learn reading and writing. So he began nine village schools and a high school. Within ten years, the organisation he founded opened eighty-five schools, a college and a hospital – all without any help from the government. The result? Today, eighty five percent of the Hmars know the joy of reading and writing, whereas the national 'functional' literacy of India is less than thirty percent.

### **Producing Professionals**

This Bible translator-turned educator made sure that his schools give the best education to his people. The result? Over the years, their graduates became India's ambassadors, Chief Secretaries of States, a Director General of Police, a Member of Parliament, high ranking officers on the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), doctors, lawyers, engineers, professors, journalists and other professionals.

Headhunting is now history. Hmars are well on their way to health and cultural vitality. In 1975, India's Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi requested Pudaite to serve as her unnamed special Emissary to negotiate peace with the Mizo guerrillas, Pudaite reveals.

Similar stories do abound in India. Indeed, the development of the vernacular languages of the country and the subsequent establishment of schools, printing presses and launching of publications by Bible translators and Christian missionaries have triggered a socio-economic and cultural renaissance among these communities.

### **Eastern Religion**

Christianity is an Eastern religion, originating in the land of Palestine in the Middle East. It is based on the



life and message of Jesus Christ. The history of the world has been divided into B. C, 'Before Christ', and A. D, *Anno Domini* (Latin, meaning 'in the year of our Lord'). It has sometimes been said that 'history' is 'his' story – the story of Jesus. According to the Bible, before his ascension to heaven, Jesus had promised his disciples that he would come back to the earth again. Then he commanded them what they should do till his return: "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. (*Mark 16:15-16*) .... All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age. (*Matthew 28:18-20*)....You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth." (*Acts 1:8*). The rest is history. The disciples took it up as a challenge. And that is how Christianity began to spread, including in India.

### **Enter Thomas the Jew**

The 'arrival' or 'rising presence' of Christians in India was neither sudden nor simple. The spread of Christian belief and congregations within the continent, or subcontinent of India, moreover, is still an ongoing, uneven process. This process is believed to have begun nearly two thousand years ago, stretching from c.52 A. D, with the arrival of Apostle Thomas, to the present. It is believed he arrived in Muzuri (Cranganore/Kodungalloor), now in the Thrissur district of Kerala in A. D 51-52. There he preached the gospel to the Jewish community probably in Hebrew language, and then to the natives. Thomas had already received a divine gift for languages (Bible, *Acts of the Apostles* Chapter 2)

which might have made it easy for him to communicate the gospel to the Malayalees in their own language.

### **European Waves**

The second half of the 15th century is renowned for great voyages of discovery under Western Europe leading to the founding of colonial empires in America, Africa and Asia. The pioneers of this enterprise were Spain and Portugal. One of their desires was to find a new trade route to India. Thus the Portuguese voyager Vasco da Gama guided by an Arab pilot arrived in Kozhikode in 1498. The arrival of the Portuguese was the beginning of the Roman Catholic influence in India. The Catholics under the Jesuits continued the propagation of Christianity. The Jesuit Father Robert de Nobille started the Madurai Mission in 1606. Father Constant Joseph Beschi was another famous personality of the Madurai Mission who became a master of the Tamil language. The Goa Mission took the initiative to start printing in India.

### **The Protestant Missions**

During the early 18th century, while the Jesuits were carrying on the work in Tamil Nadu, the Protestant missionaries also came to this part of South India. Besides Portugal, other trading companies of the Europe had already arrived in India. Most of the newcomers were Protestants.

The Dutch settled in Pulikat (1609), Sadras (1647), and Negapattam (1660); The British at Masulipattam (1622), Madras (1639), Cuddalore (1683) and Calcutta (1689); The French at Pondicherry (1674); The Danes at two places whose names are household words in Indian church history: Tranquebar (Tarangambadi), in what is now the Tanjore district of Tamil Nadu (1620), and Serampore (1676) in Bengal near Kolkatta. The French were Roman Catholics but the rest were Protestants, and

it was in their stations that Protestant Mission work began. Not that it was in any way their policy to spread Protestant Christianity among the people of India. Far from it; they had no such intentions. Their sole aim was trade and profit. They brought chaplains to minister to their own people. But they made no attempt to officially spread Christianity.

In this, they were not different from most other Protestants. For the Protestant churches of Europe, though they had been in existence since the early 16th century, were slow to recognize any obligation to preach the gospel. For the first century and a half, after Martin Luther's revolt against the Pope, they had been mainly occupied with their own religious and political struggles. However, in England, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) was founded by the Church of England in 1698 to start charity schools and distribute Bible and other Christian literature. In 1701, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Countries (SPG) was formed for the same purpose.

### **No Entry for Missionaries**

However, the man who first conceived the idea of sending Protestant missionaries to India was King Frederick IV of Denmark, a Lutheran. He found two Germans, Bartholomew Ziegenbalg and Henry Pluetschau. They were products of a spiritual revival movement called Pietism, which had begun in the Lutheran church in Germany in the last quarter of the 17th century, which gave importance to personal devotion to Christ. They arrived in Tranquebar on 9 July 1706. They learned Tamil and Portuguese and later established a printing press in 1712. Other missionaries included Benjamin Schultze and C.F. Schwartz. Meanwhile, the SPG missionaries also started arriving in India.

By the end of the 18th century, it was abundantly clear that the next period in the history of India was to be the British period, who established three Presidencies in Bengal, Madras and Bombay. However, neither the East India Company (1600) nor the British Empire (1757) allowed any Christian missionary enter India during first two centuries. It was only in the mid 19th century that they even permitted a select few missions to work in India. The British Empire never officially promoted Christianity in India.

A number of independent missionary societies were established in England, the USA and other countries of the West during the last decade of the 18th and first two decades of the 19th century who spread their wings all over the world including India to establish schools, printing press, hospitals and other social activities besides communicating the gospel of Christ. In England, this was one of the fruits of the Evangelical Revival Movement - the English counterpart of the Pietist Movement in Germany. The old societies, S.P.C.K. and S.P.G had been in existence. The new missions included the Baptist Missionary Society (1792), the London Missionary Society (1795), the Church Missionary Society (1799), and the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (1813). In America, the first society, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions was founded in 1810. With the landing of William Carey, in November 1793 in Kolkatta, Bengal, began the epoch-making era of modern missions in India.

Thus, from the day of Apostle Thomas, all these missions tremendously helped the growth of Christianity and the nation of India. Besides these mission organisations, a number of churches, both foreign and native, were involved in the propagation of the gospel and in the socio-cultural development of the country. However, after Independence, India has stopped giving



permission to foreign Christian missions. But the Constitution of India has given freedom to 'profess, practice and propagate' any faith in India. Thus Christianity in India is 2000 years old and as history has recorded, its contribution to the development of Indian languages, literature, education, printing and journalism and other socio economic sectors has been substantial.

### **Impact on Languages**

It was the Christian missionaries who took utmost interest to promote the mother tongues of India. For example, here is the story of Assamese language:

#### **Asamiya Out, Bengali In**

The British were strangers to the land and had no knowledge of the local tongue. So people from other provinces of India began to pour into Assam and settle down as interpreters and clerks of the British to enable them carry on the newly established administration. Under their influence, in 1836, the British government in India, threw Asamiya language out of the law courts and schools and the Bengali language was installed in its place.

#### **First Primer**

However, the same year the Assamese language lost its official position, two outstanding missionaries of the American Baptist Mission, Nathan Brown and Oliver Cutter arrived in Assam with their families, and set their station in Sadiya, Upper Assam. Later, Miles Bronson began work in Jaipur and Cyrus Baker in Sibsagar. Among other things, Brown and Cutter had brought along with them a printing machine as part of their missionary equipment. Realising at once that to reach the heart of the people, they must approach them through the medium of their mother tongue which is their heart language, the missionaries immediately set about

learning it, and within three months of their arrival in Assam, they produced the first Assamese primer for use in the schools which they had established. Bronson had brought another press in Sadiya. In 1838, the mission and the press were moved to Jaipur.

### First Book

“Even before arrival of the American Baptists, the English missionaries, William Carey and Joshua Marshman, had started work in this direction from Serampore near Kolkatta. And in collaboration with an Assamese Pandit Atmaram Sarma of Kaliabar (Nowgong District), they had translated the entire Bible into Asamiya and published it from Serampore in 1813. This was the first Assamese book in print”.<sup>2</sup>

Another contribution of Brown was his Assamese version of the New Testament. In addition to the Christian tracts and psalms which he composed and published, Brown also arranged for the publication of several Assamese manuscripts. His wife also wrote a few text books and stories in Assamese.

### Language Study Tools

These dictionaries and grammars were very essential for learning the language. In 1839, W. Robinson published *A Grammar of the Assamese Language* from Serampore. This is the first published Assamese Grammar. In 1848 the Rev. Brown published from Sibsagar his '*Grammatical Notice of the Assamese Language*'. From the same place was published Mrs. Cutter's *Vocabulary*. In 1894, G. F. Nicholl published, along with his *Manual of the Bengali Language*, an *Assamese Grammar*. All these grammars of the Assamese language were written in English and were influenced by the method of English grammar, but they represent the first scientific attempt at studying the Assamese language.

The Baptist Mission Press in Sibsagar published Bronson's *Dictionary in Assamese and English* in 1867. This is the first published Assamese Dictionary. Sri Jaduram Barua had compiled a Dictionary even earlier but unfortunately it did not see the light of day.

### **Missionaries Defend Asamiya**

As stated earlier, Assamese was replaced by Bengali in the law courts and schools in 1836. In general opinion, the British did so "under the influence" of interpreters and clerks recruited from Bengal. This was done mainly on the assumption that Assamese was but a dialect of Bengali, and the mutual intelligibility was so high that adoption of Bengali replacing Assamese would be administratively beneficial. It created bitterness among the speakers of Assamese.

The missionaries who had created grammar books, dictionaries and journals in Assamese came forward to defend Asamiya. They didn't keep quiet at this injustice done to the Assamese people. They demonstrated the distinct linguistic identity of Assamese. According to Sisir Kumar Das, "The American missionaries, Dr Miles Bronson, Dr. Nathan Brown, and their associate Nidhi Levi Farwell, put up a strong resistance against the official policy."<sup>3</sup>

### **First Newspaper**

The newspaper, *Arunoday (The Sunrise)*, that they launched in 1844 was the main arm for this struggle. An Assamese literateur of the time, Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, supported by the missionaries published several spirited articles in *Arunoday*, defending Asamiya. Phukan's *A Few Remarks on the Assamese Language*, a pamphlet of force and power pleading for Asamiya was published in 1849 by the missionaries at their Sibsagar press. The agitation continued but in vain. However, at last, in 1873, after 37 years, the British government

reinstated Assamese as the official language of Assam. With the revival of Asamiya triggered by the missionaries, several local thinkers began to address several issues of the time. And the missionary press fully supported them.

### **No More Oriya**

The same is the story of Oriya language also. By the first half of the nineteenth century, Oriya faced a total humiliation and ill-treatment from the British government and the Bengali officials whose aim was to wipe it out from the language map of India. There was a well motivated conspiracy of some British administrators and native Bengali officials in this regard. It was in 1803 that the British took over the rule of Orissa.

### **Oriya Out, Hindustani In**

During the implementation of vernacular languages in Government offices in 1837, the native Oriya language was opposed by these foreign administrators. It was first the Collector of Balasore District who wrote to the Commissioner Mr. Mills requesting him not to implement the Oriya language. Adding salt to the injuries of the poor Oriyas, Mr. Mills recommended the implementation of Hindustani instead of Oriya.

### **Oriya Out, Bengali In**

Taking advantage of this, the then inspector of schools of the western region, passed the order on 27 June 1847 to implement Bengali as the medium of teaching in schools. As a result, the collector of Cuttack, Mr. Bowring, implemented the same in Kendrapara and Mahasimhapur vernacular schools. He even declared that "Oriya is only a dialect of Bengali". This unfortunate statement of Mr. Bowring was however, not convincing to the Commissioner, Mr. Goldsbarry. He took the view of the educationists and accepted Oriya as a "purified derivative of the Sanskrit language." He also realised that



if such a language dies or its letters are altered, it will bring disaster to the people of Orissa. He further was of the opinion that use of Bengali in place of Oriya will be most dangerous. The feelings of Goldsbarry were also shared by the Collector Puri, Mr. Forbes. Both of them felt that Oriya should be the medium of learning for the Oriyas, and also the official language.

### **Missionaries Activate the Press**

The Christian missionaries had already been in Orissa from 1822. They had established the Orissa Missionary Press in Cuttack in 1838. Agitated over the threat of the government and Bengali officials, the young Oriya people launched a journal named *Utkala Dipika*, with the full support of the missionaries. They used its columns to defend Oriya. The missionary printing facility was made available for the cause of Oriya.

The School Inspector Robert Serry and also the Director of Public Instruction (DPI) of Bengal Government wanted Bengali continued as the medium of instruction. However, the then Commissioner, Rev. T. Ravenshaw fully supported Oriya. The people also expressed their full support to him through *Utkala Dipika*. Thus with consistent efforts, the Government under pressure, agreed to Rev. Ravenshaw to make Oriya as the medium of instruction and accordingly, a law was passed on 8 November 1868.

### **Oriya Out, Sanskrit In**

However, without paying any heed to the order, there was a continuous undeterred effort again on the part of some Bengali teachers who were bent upon derecognising the identity of the Oriya language. A school teacher of Balasora school, Kantichandra Bhattacharya by name wrote a book derecognising Oriya as a language. His book '*Odia Swatantra bhasa nay*' (Oriya is not an independent language) was published in 1870 and sent to the Government. In addition, the

school inspector who happened to be a Bengali immediately ordered for teaching of Sanskrit and Bengali in schools at Balasore.

### **Missionaries Defend Oriya**

The missionaries had already produced linguistic proof confirming the fact of Oriya as an independent language. Especially it was Sir A. Sutton who in 1831 produced the first Grammar book of Oriya, speaking about the individuality of Oriya. Also, Sir W. C Lacey who produced a number of school text books in Oriya and who also was helping the government translate their orders into Oriya fully supported Oriya to be developed.

And fortunately enough, the Collector of Balasore, Sir John Beams who was a well known linguist supported the missionaries and the people of Orissa in their fight for their own language. To counter the claim of Bengalis, he wrote another book in English establishing Oriya as one of the ancient languages of India and thereby suggested that it should be taught in all schools in Orissa. And Commissioner Rev. Ravenshaw also supported Beams. However, it took several more years for the government to make Oriya the official language of the State.

Both Rev. Ravenshaw and Sir John Beams are fully responsible in restoring the prestige of Oriya language for which act of their greatness they will be ever remembered by the people of Orissa. It would not have been possible for them to hold such a strong view without the help of Christian missionaries, both in Orissa and in Serampore. William Carey of Serampore had already produced a polyglot dictionary of 13 languages including Oriya. As Sinirudha says, "it was the publication and propagation of Oriya books by the missionaries that strengthened the morale of the people in general and language in particular."<sup>4</sup>

### **Reducing to Writing**

These were just two examples of how the Christian missionaries stood for the development of the vernacular languages of India. Christianity is unique among the world religions in being born with a Bible in its cradle. Bible is the most sacred book of the Jewish and Christian religions. They both consider the Bible to be the Word of God. The Bible began as oral literature thousands of years ago. As time passed, people wrote down various parts of the book. For many centuries, the Bible existed only in handwritten manuscript form.

The Bible is the most widely read book in history. It is probably also the most influential. More copies have been distributed of the Bible than of any other book. It has also been translated more times into more languages than any other book. Countless people have turned to the Bible for comfort, hope and guidance during times of trouble and uncertainty. Millions of people have been named after Biblical characters, and the names of many cities and other places come from the Bible. Thousands of works of art have been based on Biblical characters and stories.

In the beginning there was no written word. There was only the spoken word, and, as it was later to be recorded in the book of Genesis, God created the universe by speaking words into the void. Later, not only was the Bible written down in the existing forms of writing, it was also translated into other popular languages of the world.

### **India: A Babel of Tongues**

Language is human speech, either spoken or written. And language is the most common system of communication. In fact, language must have been the biggest single factor in the success of man in developing

complex societies. India has a population of over 1.2 billion forming a sixth of the human race, deriving from six main ethnic groups: Negrito, Proto-Australoids or Austriacs, Mongoloids, Mediterranean or Dravidian, Western Brachycephals, and Nordic Aryans.

India is also multilingual. The extent of linguistic heterogeneity can be gauged by the number of mother tongues recorded by various authorities. In 1927, Sir George Grierson, while working on his Linguistic Survey of India, has listed 225 main languages in the country. But the 1961 Census recorded 1,652 mother tongues in India, taking into account dialects spoken even by five persons. The 1971 census gives a figure of 700 languages having taken into account only dialects spoken by 1000 people and above. At least 200 of these had 10,000 or more speakers each, and 33 are spoken by people numbering over a lakh (100,000) Tribal languages constituted a quarter of the 1,652 mother tongues.

### **Linguistic Enrichment**

Since most of these pioneer Bible translators were from the West, their influence on Indian languages is just a natural consequence. The impact is to be noted in its various aspects including orthography, morphology, vocabulary, phrases, idioms, literature and education. For example, until the arrival of the Bible translators, the Malayalam language did not have a standardised spelling. They were conscious of this inconsistency. The introduction of printing by Hermann Gundert and Benjamin Bailey in Kerala, and Basel Mission in Mangalore helped this process of standardisation. And later the launching of newspapers accomplished a perfection in this area. The punctuation symbols introduced by the Bible translators include comma, semi-colon, colon, full stop, bracket, quotation marks, question mark, exclamation mark, hyphen, dash and apostrophe.



Moreover, there are several Biblical words which were originally, Hebrew, Greek or Aramaic, that have been adopted into Malayalam as it is, or an exclusive new word coined in Malayalam, thus enriching the vocabulary. Several Biblical idioms and phrases have taken root in Malayalam. Politicians and journalists freely use it to drive home a point of their argument more effectively. Also we owe to the Bible a number of proverbs and maxims which we freely converse daily, in almost every language of India including Malayalam.

### **Better Tools**

Lexicography has been defined as the science and art of compiling dictionaries. The compilation of lexical materials in Malayalam falls into three stages, and at each stage the influence of Christian missionaries is clearly seen. In the first two stages, it is direct, whereas in the third it is indirect. In the first stage, we notice the efforts of the Catholic missionaries during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They hailed from Portugal, Italy, Germany, and Austria. Unfortunately, the materials they collected were not put to public use but were used by foreign students in the Catholic seminaries at Ampazhakkad and Varapuzha in Kerala. Later came the protestant missionaries including Hermann Gundert and Benjamin Bailey who did great service in developing the Malayalam language by producing grammars, dictionaries, newspapers and school textbooks,

### **Enriching Tamil**

Like in other Indian languages, the Tamil language and literature too received a big boon with the arrival of Christian missionaries. In fact, Tamil was the first Indian language to get into print. *The Cartilha* of 1554 printed at Lisbon in Roman script has indubitably established the fact that Tamil was the first among the Indian languages that found itself in print in the world. There is

a very great likelihood that Nazareth, Cavalco and Thomas de Cruz, hailing from the pearl fishing coast, might have helped to translate the psalms and the hymns. Conde, who already had experience of preaching in Ceylon, superintended and edited the manuscript.

### **Discovery of 'Doctrina'**

*Doctrina Christam, en lingua Malaar Tamil*, a 16-page book printed at Quilon in Kerala in 1578 is preserved at the Harvard University Library, USA. This book is the Tamil translation of a catechism by Francis Xavier and it has the Tamil name *Tampiraan Vanakkam*. Two priests, Henrique Henriques and Manoel Pedro were the brains behind the production of this book. Another *Doctrina Christiana*, printed in 1579 at Cochin in Tamil is preserved at the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

### **Robert de Nobili**

Missionary, Robert de Nobili (1577-1656), who lived in Madurai like a *Sadhu*, made great impact on the country. After distributing his small share of ancestral property to the poor, Robert de Nobili, at the age of 19, joined the novitiate in Naples, Italy. Committed to serve the people, in 1603, he set sail to India in a Portuguese ship from Lisbon. Arriving in Goa in May 1605, he lived at the College of St. Paul in Goa, later moved to Cochin, and then to Madurai in 1606, and established the renowned Madura Mission.

### **'Forerunner of Tamil Prose'**

Known as *Tattuva Potakar*, Nobili learnt Tamil and wrote *Atma Nirnayam*, *Nanopadeca Kantam* and other prose works. According to Varadarajan, "though his prose style was heavily loaded with colloquial words and phrases, he can rightly be regarded as the forerunner of modern Tamil prose. No one during this period wrote so many prose works in Tamil."<sup>5</sup>

**Bartholomew Ziegenbalg**

The King of Denmark Frederick IV had a chaplain namely Dr. Lutkens who wanted to purchase from the King of Tanjore some land to establish a Christian mission. Through the efforts of two Danish merchants Crape and Gedde, a treaty between Denmark and the Nayak King Achutappa was concluded in 1620, by which the Nayak ceded Tranquebar with fifteen neighbouring villages – a strip of land 25sq. miles against an annual tribute of Rs.3,111. Fortunately for him, he met one of the most outstanding personalities in Denmark, Bartholomew Ziegenbalg (1688-1719) who was born in 1688 and educated in Halle, Germany. His is a name to cherish in the history of early printing in India. He was persuaded to join the Danish mission at Tranquebar along with another devoted missionary Heinrich Plutschau.

Ziegenbalg landed in Tranquebar in July 1706, establishing the first Protestant Mission in India. He went home in October 1714; returned in August 1716, and died in February 1719, so that altogether he only spent just over 10 years in India. Yet it was wonderful how much he had done during that time.

He succeeded in getting a printing press from the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) in London, alongwith a printer named Jonas Finck. But misfortune intervened and the French captured the ship at Rio de Janeiro and released it after a ransom payment, and the printer Finck had fallen overboard the ship two days out from Brazil.

Somehow, the missionaries managed to find a soldier to work the press and in October 1712, a small Portuguese tract was printed followed by a Portuguese ABC for the mission school. Tamil types were cut in Halle and brought out to Tranquebar by three German printers. One of them was Johann Gottlieb Adler. In October 1713,

the first Tamil tract was printed. Later Adler had to cast a smaller Tamil fount, here itself.

Ziegenbalg's (1683-1719) *Grammatica Demulica*, first printed in 1716, in Halle, enabled the scholars to study phonetics, accidence and syntax. Quite 125 years later the linguistic genius Feriedrich Rueckert, learnt his Tamil from this. Ziegebalg has an enviable record as Lexicographer, Grammarian, Theologian, and as a founder of the leading press of the era. Fabricius, Rhenius and Graul based their grammatical works on his *opus*. He also, within two years, collected 20,000 words and expressions for his *Malabar Dictionary*. Later, he worked on a *Poetical dictionary*, with the help of Tamil poets, of nearly 70,000 words.

### **Constantius Joseph Beschi**

Born in 1680, in Venice, Constantius Joseph Beschi (1680-1746), did Grammar and philosophy for his early studies. He was proficient in addition to his native Italian, in the Classics, in French, Hebrew, Portuguese and Sanskrit. He is said to have learned Hindustani later. But his great genius in assimilating languages reached its high watermark when he mastered Tamil. In Tamil Nadu, he is known as *Viramamunivar*.

He was ordained a priest in 1709 and immediately volunteered for the Indian Mission. After a brief sojourn at Goa and Cochin, starting from Lisbon, he anchored at the Madura Mission in 1711. Because of his grounding in Tamil literature which commanded recognition, he was appointed a master in the Tamil School. His knowledge of Tamil medicine, because of his study of the language, enabled him to cure a *zamindar*, of his mortal illness, with the result that he obtained from him land to build a church on. He died in 1746 at the age of 66.



### **'Father of Tamil Lexicography'**

Beschi modernised the Tamil *Nikantus* (*Dictionaries*) which gave synonyms under different headings, and also brought out the first Tamil dictionary entitled, *Caturakarati*. To the credit of Beschi, it must be said that he was among the first to emphasise the vast difference between *Kodunthamizh* and *Senthamizh*, and he wrote two separate dictionaries for each category. It has been said that there is all the difference between *Kodunthamizh* and *Senthamizh*, as there is between Latin and Portuguese. Beschi had made an exhaustive and penetrative study of the ancient poems in Tamil published as *Nighantus*. He read with great accuracy, Sanskrit authors, in order to find how far Sanskrit had penetrated into Tamil.

Also Beschi produced a *Grammar of Kodunthamizh* which was printed at Tranquebar Mission Press in 1738. He wrote three grammars in Latin and one grammar in Tamil. The original Latin version of grammar of '*the common dialect of Tamil*' was written in 1728 and the Latin original was published in 1739 and the English translation in 1831. The Latin version of *A grammar of high dialect of the Tamil language* was written in 1730 and it was published together with the English translation in 1822.

### **Reforming Tamil Script**

The earlier Tamil inscriptions were written in *brahmi*, *grantha* and *vatteluttu* scripts. Inscriptions after the seventh century A.D. contain Tamil characters similar to the one now in vogue. This prompted some scholars to argue that *vatteluttu* and Tamil scripts originated from brahmi scripts. This view has no solid base for one can see a copious description of Tamil scripts in *Tolkappiyam*, which belongs to third century B.C. It is obvious

therefore, that Tamil language had a distinct script of its own even at that early period.

### **Vowel Reformation**

But, Beschi reformed the then existing two short and two long vowels to their present form. Before this, the two short vowels 'e' and 'o' were written with a dot on top and their corresponding long vowels 'ē' and 'ō' had no curve markers to indicate they were long vowels. His reform of Tamil script is even now praised for its usefulness.

### **Punctuation Marks**

The Christian missionaries were responsible not only for the script reform, but also they introduced punctuation marks including space between words. These two innovations helped to greatly simplify the task of reading by eliminating reflection and back tracking and thus increasing speed and comprehension.

### **Epic of 3,615 Verses**

Beschi composed the epic, *Tempavani* which narrates the life of Jesus Christ together with other traditional stories in 3,615 verses. Besides, he also wrote other poetical works as the *Tirukkavalur Kalampakam* and the *Kitteriyammal Ammanai*. His grammatical work in the *Tonnul Vilakkam* is regarded by scholars as an important work and therefore they named it as the *Kuttit Tolkappiyam*, after the famous grammatical work *Tolkappiyum*. In addition to this, he analysed the differences between literary and spoken Tamil and wrote two separate grammatical works entitled *Centamil Ilakkanam* and *Kotuntamil Ilakkanam* respectively. He also translated the *Tonnul Vilakkam* and the *Tirukkural* into Latin.

### **Rhenius**

The German missionary C.T.E. Rhenius (1790-1838) came to South India to preach Christ. He was a good

speaker and writer in Tamil, publishing a few poetical, religious and two non-religious works. He wrote a *Tamil Grammar* in 1853. He was the forerunner to Dr. G. U. Pope in many respects.

### **Johann Philipp Fabricius**

Johann Philipp Fabricius (1711-1791) was a Frankfurter, born in 1711 and was ordained as a priest at Copenhagen in 1739. Though he was originally intended for Tranquebar, he ended up in Madras serving there till 1788. His place in Tamil lexicography has been assured for ever and his other talent to compose Tamil hymns was such that these are used even so this day in several congregations.

### **George Uglow Pope**

Born in Novo Scotia, at the age of six, along with his family, G. U Pope (1820-1908) migrated to England. Quite early as a boy he had mastered the Old Testament in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek. When he was barely nineteen, he set sail for South India, during which voyage, he mastered Tamil to such a degree as to be able to preach in that language at San Thome on alighting at Madras. After eight years, he lived ten miles away from Tuticorin, at a place named after a Portuguese merchant, called Sawyerpuram. During this period of stay, he built a church and established a Seminary, where he himself taught Latin, English, Hebrew, history, mathematics and philosophy.

### **Grammar, Dictionary, Library**

Pope was a strong disciplinarian. The Oxford University soon recognised his worth and financed a library for the Seminary. Because of his stern discipline, he became unpopular and left for England in 1849, where he got married. Later, he returned to India in 1850, to Thanjavur, where he was befriended by Vedanayaka

Sastri, which association enabled Pope to read a number of Tamil works. During this period he wrote a *Tamil Hand Book*, *Tamil Grammar*, a *Tamil-English* and *English-Tamil dictionary*, books on history, and he compiled anthologies.

### **Bishop Robert Caldwell**

Bishop Robert Caldwell (1814-1891) has an international stature in comparative linguistics. He was a Scotsman, born on 7 May 1814, and studied comparative philology in Glasgow and learned art and painting at Dublin. At the early age of 20, he became an evangelist. During his long voyage to India, thanks to his friendship with a civil servant called C.P Brown, he learnt Telugu and Sanskrit, and it was fortunate that on arrival in Madras, he met men of stature like Pope, Winslow, Anderson and Bower.

His *Comparative grammar of the Dravidian languages* published in 1856 (640 pages, Revised edition: 1874; Third edition: Wyatt and T. Ramakrishna Pillai in 1913; Reprinted by Madras University in 1961), has to this day been an achievement of stature. It is a monumental work which speaks of his knowledge of the South Indian languages.

### **Hindustani: Ketelaar**

Joan Josua Ketelaar (Ketelaar) of Elbing, prepared in 1698 the first *Hindustani Grammar* in Dutch. Latin translation by David Mills appears in his *Miscellanea Orientalia* which forms a part of his *Dissertationes Selectae* (1743). Ketelaar had acquired his knowledge of the language not only in Gujarat, but also at Agra and Lucknow, where Hindustani was spoken in a much purer form. John Fergusson's little grammar of fifty-eight pages is prefixed to his dictionary with vernacular in the Roman character published in 1773 on return to England.



### **Only Examples**

These are just examples of how much the Bible translators and Christian missionaries laboured to produce grammar books, dictionaries and first printed materials. In almost every Indian language, the missionaries were pioneers in producing linguistic tools. For instance, in the 73 Indian languages that I looked into, the missionaries produced 86 dictionaries, 115 grammar books and 45 journals. This was done 150- 200 years ago, when no such linguistic tools were available. Space does not permit to give details of other languages.

### **Impact on Literature**

Language and literature are inseparable. There cannot be literature without language. And language will not be there without people.

### **Three 'Elite' Languages**

With succeeding foreign invasions, Sanskrit, Persian and English have enjoyed the highest status in different periods of Indian history. Sanskrit remained the most prestigious language among the Hindus, though it was studied by a very small section of the people. It was the language of the Brahmins and of the upper caste Hindus. However, it had little functional value for the common man.

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century of India, there were two other languages that enjoyed great prestige: Arabic and Persian. However, among these two languages, though Arabic enjoyed prestige, it did not have many votaries. But Persian enjoyed popularity among the elite. The Muslim rulers made it the court language in different parts of the country.

Thus Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian ruled the contemporary literary scene of India, till the end of 18th century. But as the century turned, the nation began to

witness a linguistic revolution with the development of local languages and introduction of English. And the 19th century was the era of awakening of Indian languages, literature and literacy, primarily triggered by Bible translators and Christian missionaries.

### **Serampore Mission Press**

The establishment of the Serampore Mission Press in West Bengal marked the beginning of this literary revolution. Despite the fact that the first printing press was established in the mid-sixteenth century in Goa, it was in 1800 that the printing press was firmly established in the country, and India entered a new era of communication. It took about a hundred and ten years to complete the process to bring the whole country within the orbit of printing, as a regular press, was set up in Kashmir only in 1910.

This period has three more important dates, 1835, 1857 and 1885. 1835 is important because the English language was given a new status in Indian society that year and that momentous decision played a vital role in Indian intellectual and creative life. Similarly, 1857 was the year when English education entered another phase of its history – three universities were founded with the initiation of Christian missionaries, in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, and that was the year when India registered its first most violent protest against a foreign domination. 1885, the year of the foundation of the Indian National Congress, is a landmark in the history of freedom struggle with which Indian literature was actively involved. Moreover, the year 1800 is remembered for the establishment of the College of Fort William in Calcutta, an institution where serious experiments with prose began, and the potentiality of prose as a vehicle of literary and intellectual expression was realized.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, then, the writers' choice of medium was either one of these

two prestigious languages, Sanskrit and Persian, or one of the many Indian languages. These Indian languages, other than Tamil which had the longest literary history, were comparatively younger. Adds Das: "The Christian missionaries translated the Bible, introduced the writing system for the first time and founded the basis of a prose literature in these languages. The list of translations of the Bible published by the Serampore Mission between 1800 and 1834 shows that the Christian scripture was printed in Avidhi, Baloochi, Bhageli, Bikanir, Garowali, Jaypuri, Khasi, Kumayuni, Konkani, Marwari, Multani, Palpa and various other lesser known dialects and languages."<sup>5</sup> These were the first printed prose materials in these languages.

### **Sanskritists denounce Local Languages**

However, according to Das, there was "no conscious Anglicization of the Indian languages, except the borrowing of lexical items, which grew in number continuously, and a few imitations of syntactic structure... The Sanskritists, who had always despised the modern Indian languages, *bhasas* and construed them inappropriate as vehicle of higher thought, felt that Sanskritization was the surest way to uplift them. The English-educated Indian, too, equally scornful of these vernaculars remained indifferent to them. Neither the classicists nor the Anglicists, with noted exceptions like the missionaries, understood the genius of these languages, the nature of their relation with the people and the traditions of the country."<sup>6</sup> Professor V.K. Gokak's observation on the Kannada literary awakening is equally true of most other Indian languages:

'English literature was not merely a new planet that swum into the ken of Kannada writers. It was a whole firmament. The novel, the short story, tragedy, biography, autobiography, diary, epistle, the lyric and the essay – these and other literary forms with their enchanting

subdivision, opened to them an infinity of wealth which dazzled their eyes.'<sup>7</sup>

### **The Power to Reproduce Literature**

The most important event that revolutionised the literary production by changing the relationship between the author and the audience and the nature of the transmission process of texts was the advent of the printing press. In January 1800, Joshua Marshman (1769-1837), William Ward (1769-1823) and William Carey (1761-1834), three Christian missionaries of the Baptist Mission started a printing press at Serampore, then under Danish protection. Their aim was to print Bible in different languages of India. Within a decade, that press, known as the Serampore Mission Press, grew into a massive organisation, having the largest type foundry in Asia.

#### **First Initiative**

The Serampore Mission press was not the first printing press in India. Also, the first ever printed work in an Indian language, which happens to be Tamil, was set in the Roman alphabet in Lisbon in 1551. Three years later, when the first book was printed in India, its language was Portuguese, its author St Francis Xavier. The books printed between 1557 and 1588 in Goa were all written in Portuguese. Presses were also established in three places in Kerala during the period, but there was a complete lull for the next many decades.

The second phase of Indian printing began with Danish initiative, particularly with the zeal of the protestant missionaries, the best known among them being Bartholomew Ziegenbalg. The Danish Mission established at Tranqueber in 1706, started a printing press seven years later. The third phase of Indian printing began in Madras. The East India Company installed the press at Vepery, a suburb of Madras, under the charge of Johann Fabricius of the Danish Mission.



Printing presses began to emerge in different parts of the country, mainly in major towns. Certain language areas, of course, remained outside the incunabula for a long time and in some areas the facilities for printing came as late as the first decade of 20th century. In Orissa, to give an instance, the first press was established in 1837 – Orissa Mission Press. The Bellary Press (1825), The London Missionary Society Press (1840), The American Mission Press (1845) – all helped the growth of Indian literature.

### **Democratic and Popular**

Thus, with the establishment of printing press, prose began to flow in regional languages, making it available for the masses. The greatest effect of this prose revolution was that literature became democratic and popular. Writers began to address issues that affect ordinary people in their everyday existence. As K. M George says, "The Western strands in the fabric of most of Indian literature are quite identifiable. The contacts with the west have been greatly beneficial to the many sided development of Indian literature. And through literature, the impact had permeated to the whole of the society. Life and letters are inextricably bound to each other, and a discussion of the one would be incomplete without a consideration of the other."<sup>8</sup>

### **Enhanced Values**

Rabindranath Tagore was a "universal man." In his own inimitable way he welcomed the mingling of East and west: "When the streams of ideals that flow from the East and West mingle, their murmur in some profound harmony of meaning it delights my soul." Mahatma Gandhi also said, "No culture can live if it attempts to be exclusive. I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the culture of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off by any".

Jawaharlal Nehru who possessed a most progressive and rational mind nurtured in the traditions of Western liberalism. In his *Discovery of India* there are several passages which highlight his ideas on cultural assimilation. Here is one: "It was India's way in the past to welcome and absorb other cultures. That is much more necessary today, for we march to the one world of tomorrow where national cultures will be intermingled with the international culture of the human race."

### **Encountering Exploitation**

Literature inspired by progressive ideals had an important part to play in preparing people to accept such social changes. For example, perhaps, one of the greatest socio-religious movements in India initiated by Sri Narayana Guru in Kerala, who worked not only for the liberation of the Ezhava community but for all those who were downtrodden and oppressed. He fought against polytheism and taught that there is only one God. This may sound ordinary to the modern man, but it meant a revolution for a community which had a pantheistic tradition. If there is only one God there can be only one religion and that is the religion of man. If this is true, then it follows that there cannot be different castes, some with privileges and others with disabilities. One of the greatest influences on his revolutionary thinking and writing was the Bible.

### **Literature Promoting Civil Liberties**

The civil liberties are a gift of the Bible. As long as India was ruled by the British, we had two approaches in politics – the Britisher's approach and the Indian nationalist's approach. Indian nationals naturally wanted self-government, but the British had a different view for they believed they were engaged in a "civilizing mission". It is interesting to note that Indian nationalism was born in the English language and as a result of the impact of

Western ideas of political thinking. The awakened Indian studied avidly the writings of Macaulay, Wilberforce, Bright, Paine, and Mazzini. It is from these writers that India came to an understanding of what liberty really is. The Indian National Congress was formed in 1885 as a by-product of the enlightenment gained from Western thinkers.

The Bible translators and missionaries published such materials so that the readers could become rational in their approach and analysis. Says George: "The British united India, established law and order, introduced a type of education which was secular and science-oriented. We learnt the ideals of democracy from the West and realised that a Government of the people, for the people can only be run by the people. We watched the penal laws of the country being drafted on an equalitarian all-India basis. We were made aware of the right of the people to question injustice and exploitation. This enlightenment on the democratic process was indeed a great step in our forward march. There was freedom of speech, and by and large a liberal atmosphere prevailed. Indian literature of this century reveals this progressive trend clearly."<sup>9</sup>

### **Literature by Women**

A great impact of this enlightenment was that a number of women writers came to Indian literature scene. Also, both men and women began to crusade for the emancipation of women. In this regard, the teachings of the Bible and the writings of the missionaries through journals and books had been effective guides which promoted equality of both male and female.

Also in this new literature, the scientific spirit of enquiry and the keenness to harness the forces of nature in the service of human happiness inspired the Indians. Philosophical speculation lost its glamour and the

intelligentsia devoted more time to the study of physical sciences, inculcating empirical spirit. What can be seen and checked by the senses became more important than imaginative explorations.

### Impact on Prose

In most Indian languages earlier, prose had a very limited sphere of application and was hardly used, with a few exceptions, in literary works. However, Indian writers in the nineteenth century discovered the potentiality and the possibilities of prose as an effective instrument of communication, both literary and non-literary. And in this discovery the initial impulses came from the foreigners, Christian missionaries and the officials of the East India Company.

The Christian missionaries started taking interest in the modern Indian languages long before the officials of the East India Company did. The first book of Malayalam prose *Samksepa Vedartham*, based on *Compendium Doctrine Christianae*, written by Father Clement, was printed in Rome in 1772. Henrique Henriques, a missionary from Portugal wrote on the same subject, under the title *Tambiran Vanakkam* in 1578. The Italian missionary, Robert de Nobili, who came to Madurai in the first decade of the seventeenth century wrote Tamil prose. The versatile scholar Joseph Beschi, whose contributions included a grammar of colloquial Tamil, a dictionary, an epic on the life of Jesus, *Tempavani; Vetiyar Olukkam*, a prose work on the duties of the Christian preachers; and a "hilarious satirical" prose narrative *Paramartha Guruvin Katai* (Story of a True Guru), written in 1740 and printed in 1822.

The first prose work in Bengali owes also to Christian inspiration: Manuel de Assumpcao, a Portuguese, and Dom Antonio, a native Christian, wrote on Christian doctrines in 1743. Telugu, too, had its first printed prose work, a version of the *New Testament*, translated by



Benjamin Schultze in the middle of the eighteenth century.

### **National Influence**

Historically, with the establishment of the Serampore Mission in 1800 and works initiated by the Church Missions Society in Kerala, Basel Mission in Karnataka (1834), American Marathi Mission in Bombay (1811), and American Baptist Mission in Assam (1836), there was a steady increase of prose works, mostly translations of the Bible, but also Christian tracts, and dictionaries and grammars. In other languages also the Bible translators have taken the initiative to publish prose works.

And when the missionaries started schools in different areas they took serious interest in producing suitable text books for school children. The most lasting contribution of the missionaries was, of course, the pedagogical material, the lexicons and the grammars, many which served as models for the native grammarians and lexicographers.

### **Not Perfect but Pioneer**

The missionary prose, naturally remained an object of curiosity, with a few conspicuous exceptions. Most of the translations of the Bible into Indian languages followed the original, the Hebrew and the Greek texts, too closely, sometimes without caring for the accepted norms of the target languages. However, it has to be accepted that although the missionary prose style was often described disparagingly by the native speakers, as *padre (priest) Malayalam* or *padri Bangle* or *Bible Telugu*, because of its quaintness and stilted quality, they were the first serious experiments in coherent and long narrative prose writing.

### **Fruitful Experiments**

Fortunately, the efforts of the missionaries and those of the officials of the East India Company merged at the

College of Fort William, and they worked in close cooperation with the Serampore Mission, mainly through the mediation of the noble missionary, William Carey. The College of Fort William took the initiative in preparing text books for the British civilians. These books were written by native scholars of repute but under the supervision of British scholars. Some of these works were translated from Sanskrit and some from Persian. A number of them were also original writings. The languages used in these books were Bengali, Hindi, Urdu and Marathi. The scholars of the College of Fort William were the first to experiment with prose, which had not been used previously in these areas of knowledge so extensively. As a result, various prose-styles were employed by different authors, and at times by the same author.

### **Foundation for Journalism**

The prose written by foreign scholars, both the Christian missionaries and the officials of the Company did make the Indians aware of the potentialities of the new medium. And as Das says, "None will disagree that prose in India grew 'in response to a new set of intellectual, social and economic requirements', but it is difficult not to see the beginnings of that response in the activities of the missionaries and of the Indian scholars working at the College of Fort William. In this period, i.e. during 1800-1835, prose indeed grew in response to various sets of social and intellectual demands. There was a demand for the production of pedagogical material. The other demand came from the religious and social movements. Naturally, prose became the most effective instrument of debate on socio-religious issues. Along with the religious debates emerged journalism in some of the Indian languages which demanded a very wide operation and application of prose. These factors, then, pedagogy, socio-religious reforms and journalistic activities, accelerated the growth of prose."<sup>10</sup>

Thus, by translating the Bible into Indian languages, the missionaries have been putting a firm foundation for the development of literature in these languages. No wonder, the Indians have gratefully acknowledged their contribution. For example, the Tamil Nadu Government has erected statues at Marina Beach in Chennai, honouring the missionaries, Beschi, Caldwell and Pope – who produced grammars and dictionaries, and translated Tamil classics; Andhra Pradesh has erected statues of C.P Brown and Sir Arthur Cotton at Hussain Sagar, for their contribution to Telugu language and literature; John Wilson, promoter of Bombay University has a college in his name; William Miller, promoter of Madras University has a road in his name in Chennai; William Carey has a museum in his name in Serampore. But none of them did anything to perpetuate their name but they were solely sold out for the prosperity of India.

### **Missionaries translate Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavad Gita for the Europeans**

The Serampore Mission's translation programme was not confined to rendering scriptures in Indian vernaculars only. But it extended to translating oriental literatures into English and Western science and knowledge into Indian vernaculars. From 1818, they were fully engaged in translating the text books of science and humanities into Bengali and Hindi from English.

Carey also was involved in the translation of Sanskrit works into English and also works written in foreign languages into Sanskrit. In 1803, he submitted a proposal to the Fort William College to make arrangements of publication of a series of Sanskrit classics with English translation. But it was not approved for some reason. Therefore, he drew the attention of Francis Buchanan to the matter and he referred the case to Sir John Anstruther, Chief Justice of Supreme Court and the then President of the Asiatic Society. Thus it was decided that

the Asiatic Society and the Fort William College would jointly publish the series.

On the recommendation of Carey, the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* the most popular epics of India were selected for the first step. Accordingly, the first volume of English translation of the *Ramayana* translated by Carey and Joshua Marshman was published from the Serampore Mission Press in 1806. These translations received warm appreciation in England and other countries of Europe.

But notable translations of Hindu religious literatures (like the Vedas, Puranas, Upanishad etc.) were done by William Ward in his massive works in four volumes: *Account of the Writings, Religions, Customs and Manners of the Hindoos*. Ward learnt Bengali, but not Sanskrit. The Serampore pundits translated the texts into Bengali from Sanskrit and ward then rendered those in English from Bengali. The book was meant especially to give the Europeans a faithful background which could sharpen their readings of the Hindu writings. Introduction of such method of translation showed the path of expanding the horizon of knowledge of one country with the help of other countries.

Charles Wilkins was the first among the western scholars who had presented Indian literature in Europe. Residing in Varanasi as per the instruction of Warren Hastings, he did a yeoman service to Sanskrit and translated *Bhagavad Gita* in 1785 and *Hitopadesa* in 1786 into English.

Thus, by developing the local languages of India, the Bible translators and Christian missionaries triggered a revolution in the promotion and production of regional literatures.



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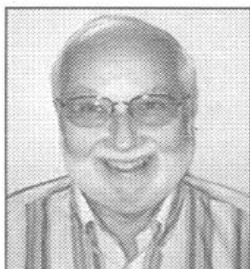
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## Chapter - XII

### CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION TO REVITALIZATION OF CULTURES IN INDIA

Christianity, with 2,000 years of history in India, has had considerable impact on the cultures of the peoples in various regions of the Indian sub-continent. The local cultures in turn have modified and influenced the forms and expressions of Christianity. It has been a mutual enrichment process including the development of an indigenous Christianity. There has been significant Christian presence and influence in such diverse cultural centres as Bengal and Maharashtra, in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, and in North East India as well as among India's aboriginal peoples.

The multi-faceted career of William Carey provides an example. Born in England in 1761, Carey arrived in India in 1793, and died at Serampore in 1834. Together with Indian and European colleagues, Carey and the Serampore Mission produced a monumental yield of



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literature, correspondence and institutions pertaining to Indian culture, religion, education and social protest which had particular impact for Bengali cultural renewal.

A major component was the production of Bengali literature beginning with Carey's translation of the Bible into Bengali. Carey's Bengali New Testament, the first book of prose published in the Bengali language, was the beginning of a vernacular cultural movement in Bengal. Carey's colossal literary contribution went far beyond Bible translation to the publication of tracts, pamphlets, newspaper, and other periodicals, as well as translation of the Ramayana into English and into Bengali. Both the Ramayana and the Mahabharata were published in Bengali by the Serampore Mission Press. Apart from Christian religious literature, a list of Bengali publications during 1800-1832 runs to 60 titles.<sup>1</sup> Today Bengali is recognized as a major instrument of India's cultural renaissance.

Apart from Bengali, during his lifetime Carey and his co-workers translated the Bible into 29 Indian languages. By 1832 the entire Bengali Bible was completed, his eighth edition of the New Testament and the fifth edition of the Old Testament. That is but part of an extensive literary contribution. By 1832, two years before his death, 212,000 volumes in 40 languages had been published by the Serampore Press. Carey apparently envisioned Serampore as an Indian and Asian linguistic centre. Grammars, dictionaries and other language aids in more than 50 languages were collected at Serampore where they still are preserved in the Carey Library. Numerous Bengali scholars are among those who pay tribute to Carey and Serampore in an ongoing spate of academic dissertations and scholarly papers. The influence did not die with Carey, Marshman and Ward, but lives on in modern India.

Carey had a passion for developing the languages of India including the preservation of Sanskrit. Serampore birthed a linguistic renaissance in India. As early as 1804 Carey delivered a public lecture in Sanskrit at Fort William College. In 1806 he composed a Sanskrit Grammar for student use. Later followed a six-volume Sanskrit Dictionary (which was destroyed in the disastrous 1812 Serampore fire) and an unpublished polyglot vocabulary. The entire Bible was translated by Carey into Sanskrit.

When Serampore College was founded in 1818, Sanskrit was made a compulsory subject. The Library of the College contained fourteen Sanskrit books and sixty five Sanskrit manuscripts for use by its students and teachers. At Serampore College Sanskrit was required, and English was permitted, but Bengali was prerequisite for all further study. It is said that Bengali is closer to Sanskrit than is true of any other modern Indian language.

While Sanskrit was important for classical studies, Serampore promoted the vernacular as the medium of instruction. In doing so they struck a *via media* between the Orientalists who wanted study of Sanskrit classics for the perpetuation of the classical tradition and the Anglicists who wanted Western education in English. Over a hundred schools were organized throughout Bengal, and many English books were translated into Bengali in order to provide "modern" education in the local vernacular. Vernacular education was a distinct Serampore contribution to cultural revitalization among the common people in modern India. Serampore and Carey in numerous ways contributed to cultural renewal.

In North East India Christianity has been an effective catalyst for cultural renewal and social integration especially through education and developmental work.



The Church, as seen by Christians, has been both an agent of change and a means of enforcing traditional values as well as filling voids, as is pointed out by several scholars. But there is a flipside—the alleged Christian exploitation of tribes and the erosion of culture, religion, and traditions. Critics tend to repeat this charge which is conceded by local Christians to be at best a partial truth, at worst a gross distortion. In point of fact Christianity has been a major source of moral, social and cultural transformation among the peoples of North East India.

Apart from the dominant Christianised peoples of the North East, India's marginalised *adivasis* (aboriginal tribes) present quite a different picture. These exploited peoples regarded the land and its forests and resources as the gifts of God to the original inhabitants of Central India's tribal belt. Against the devastating effects of deprivation of tribal rights, Christianity gave the tribals a new identity and sense of dignity. Christian missionaries gave a written form to tribal languages, provided modern education, and helped the tribals fight legal battles to preserve their land rights.<sup>2</sup> Christianity has been a major sustaining force for India's original inhabitants in their struggle against cultural attacks and empowering them for social-economic liberation.

In several social and cultural spheres in various contexts Christianity has contributed to the revitalization of India's cultures.

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## **Chapter - XIII**

### **CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION TO EDUCATION IN INDIA**

**A**ll world religions – Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoarastrianism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism. and Bahaism - are Asian in their origin. Often, Christianity is misinterpreted as if it were a Western religion which came to Asia under colonial patronage. As far as India is concerned, Christianity came in instalments, first through Apostle Thomas in the very first century, secondly through Roman Catholic missions from fourteenth century, thirdly through the Protestant denominational missions from eighteenth century, and through multifarious sects in the twentieth century. Indian Christianity is as old as Christianity itself.

#### **I. Making all things new through Education**

A feature of Christianity is that it aimed to “make all things new” everywhere. A major means through which such an amount of renewal, reformation, renaissance, and rejuvenation of cultures and peoples was brought about was education. Churches established educational

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structures and taught people how to read, write, and become literary cultures. The Church in mission provided the scripts, dictionaries, grammar, literature, and the first printed books. Wherever it went in its pilgrim journey, it immensely indigenized - true to the 'pilgrim principle' and 'indigenous principle' as identified by Andrew Walls.<sup>1</sup> Human communities lived in various settings with various sociological structures. India had been a collection of kingdoms ruled by numerous small kings, dynasties, and empires. Except for the Moghul, the rest were various shades of Hindu kingdoms, into which the Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs were eventually absorbed. The Islamic society was egalitarian and male-chauvinist, ruled by its own traditions, wherein the education of the male children through the madrasas excluded the females.

The hierarchical divide in Hindu sociology kept a wide pattern of occupationally based concept of education. The *Brahmin* who came from the brain/head was the one to be given literary skills and scriptural education; the *kshatriya* was exposed to the skills of war, military and political administration; the *vysya* learnt business, and it was the lot of the *shudra* to be educated in the multifarious menial services which he was born to perform. However, at all these levels, the transference of knowledge and skills were to the male offspring; it was an extreme exception when a female got attuned into such learning. Yet, outside these communities, it was the 'broken' / outcaste / untouchable / 'Dalit' people who - with no distinction of male or female - were kept illiterate and subservient. Education was either absent or inadequate in the Indian setting. It was reserved for some and denied to the rest.

It was into such a setting that the Christian mission arrived. Whereas the colonizers were concerned to civilize the natives, and hence provided the kind of

education and discipline that was necessary, their main input was to the elite upper-castes. Such became the agents of the colonial government as civil servants and continued their dominance over the rest of the people, whom they kept down-under as oppressed and exploited. The colonizers were basically traders with profit motive and hence, not in favour of Christian missionaries who, they feared, would then insist on justice and equality. Though the British interest did not allow for Christian mission in India during the early period, later the teaming up of missionaries with local reformers as well as political authorities combined force to open the doors for Christian missionaries to arrive.

For instance, William Carey teamed up with Raja Ram Mohun Roy and the then Governor General and later the British politicians – such as Prime Minister William Pitt and his evangelical prayer partner William Wilberforce, a Member of Parliament. When the doors opened for missionaries to enter India, the 'Age of Societies' had brought numerous voluntary mission societies in the footprints of William Carey and scores of missionaries began to enter India. A peril of it was that they came in their denominational divide and gave to us a heritage which two centuries later still hurts our identity and unity. Each missionary in his or her field began a serious renaissance of the Indian socio-cultural ethos.

The first phase of the Christian missionary impact was characterized as "social reform." Even as indicated in the very title of the writing of Kenneth Ingham: *Reformers in India, 1793-1833: An Account of the Work of Christian Missionaries on behalf of Social Reform.*<sup>2</sup> This process of reform involved change of thinking of the people about their cultural practices. Some of them were rooted in religious perceptions and assumptions. People were not educated to read and know their religious

scriptures and hence, were misguided into unscriptural rites and practices and piously followed the teachings of corrupt religious gurus and cults. They were sincere and sincerely wrong but unaware of it. Lack of education was at the root of some social evils. Hence, both colonial civilizers as well as Christian missionaries began to involve in efforts to educate the people.

Education became a major arena of input for renaissance. William Carey and his team were instrumental in establishing the first-ever college for all of Asia, the Serampore College, in 1818. The name Alexander Duff became synonymous with Scottish educational missions. He kicked open a door through which numerous missions entered, offering education to India. Scottish Christian College in Kolkata, Wilson College in Mumbai, Madras Christian College in Chennai, Hislop College in Nagpur, Noble College in Machilipatnam, Scott Christian College in Nagercoil, and Kinnaird College in Lahore were followed by Christian Medical College and Hospital in Vellore, Voorhees College in Vellore, American College in Madurai, CMS College in Alwaye, St John's in Agra, St Stephen's in Delhi, Bishop's in Calcutta, and numerous others. Hannah Marshman is credited with pioneering female education and Ida Scudder with medical education for women and men. Through the decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there grew a steady impact of education on Indian masses. When the colonial government installed the Grants-in-Aid scheme to assist with educational work, it was predominantly the Christian missionaries who took advantage of it to start and perpetuate their educational missions.

All these were instrumental in creating an atmosphere of learning, thinking, and growing. Both the humanist input by the liberal British and the Christian input by missionaries nurtured Indians into a nationalist and liberal trend resulting in the second phase of

Christian missionary impact, namely, "social protest." This we note in the very title of the work of Geoffrey A. Oddie, *Social Protest in India: British Protestant Missionaries and Social Reform: 1850-1900*.<sup>3</sup> As a result of the impact of colonial and Christian involvement in education, an educated group of leaders emerged to lead India into her social upheaval to work towards a religious renewal, social reform, cultural renaissance, and political liberation. The Indian National Congress, formed in 1885, was a means of guiding India into selfhood and nationhood. Christian educational institutions and colleges were in the forefront of developing those who took up leadership.

By 1928, at the initiative of the International Missionary Council through the National Missionary Council, the Lindsay Commission studied 46 colleges in the Indian sub-continent, 5 of them theological and the rest secular liberal arts colleges. They investigated into the mission of these colleges and their effectiveness in accomplishing whatever it was that they were set out to do. Their findings and recommendations were published in the report on *Christian Higher Education in India*.<sup>4</sup> The Christian colleges saw themselves as having a mission to the nation. It was not only to educate, but to develop the leadership for the various sectors of life and service. They were committed to quality and hence, there was the steady growth of infrastructures to enable the coming together of these colleges, analyze the social situations and demands, investigate their methods, evaluate their relevance, and encourage innovative experimentations.

The All India Association for Christian Higher Education brings together the Protestant and Roman Catholic colleges across the nation of India to work together to promote relevant and quality education. Their annual conferences, workshops, seminars, and attempts



to bring together the principals, registrars, and professors of each department have helped to see an effective growth of the Christian contribution to education in India.

## II. Motivations for Christian Contribution to Education

**1. Evangelistic motivation:** Often, Christian schools are blamed for converting people. Though Christian schools did pave the way for the conversion of many to Christ and the establishing of the Church in India, particularly in the nineteenth century, the motive of education was not only conversion or Christianization. Earlier, people like Alexander Duff had dreams of evangelistic intent. He saw education as setting dynamite under the Hindu society which will explode the hold of Hinduism on India and that then Christ would emerge into the soul of India. Anyway, this dream never came true. Rather, the effect was counter-productive, in that, education enabled the Hindu to interpret and defend his faith skilfully. Rather than exploding and destroying, education helped to build up Hindu faith and ideology into a contemporary scholarly pattern and to grow global.

**2. Nation-Building Motivation:** Quite early in the history of independent India, the church determined to participate in the process of nation-building as her mission. When there was rapid change in the society in the 1950s, the National Council of Churches of India - led by the World Council of Churches - undertook a study on Rapid Social Change. The 3-year study culminated in a Consultation at Bombay in 1957. Its report published under the title *Christian Participation in Nation-Building*.<sup>5</sup> Through the next decades, the church was led to understand the challenges that lay before the citizens in organizing and governing a nation. The sociological issues, the economic factors, the political management, the religious ethos were all studied with

a view to help leadership shape a better future. Education for social change began to dominate the *modus operandi* of the Church in mission.

**3. Justice Motivation:** The Indian society appeared hierarchical and divided. The status of the Dalits and tribals emerged as a great concern to the Church. Hence, the Church institutions took the young Dalits and tribals to educational institutions where they could be taught and developed into public leadership. Because of Christian contribution of education, numerous untouchables and primal peoples were developed for public leadership. Similarly, female education was enhanced through girls' schools and women's colleges. The plight of the poor was another concern for the Church in mission. The Church consistently sided with the poor. Several agencies emerged to provide conscientization, developmental education and the means of education. Compassion, World Vision, KNH, CCF and many more poured in plenty resources to provide not only education but food and shelter for the destitutes.

Dalit liberation, tribal awakening, and female emancipation became themes of Christian education and have already proved productive. Today we have doctors, professors, administrators, and public leaders who have emerged because of Christian schools, orphanages, and scholarship schemes. Instead of a hierarchical society divided by education, India is being built into a free nation with equity where all boys and girls have equal opportunity for any level of excellence, with no predetermined bondages.

**4. Goodwill Motivation:** At the basis of the whole of Christian life and mission are the model and mission of Jesus Christ, whom the Bible portrays as the Son of God who came incarnating to reveal God to humans and to reconcile them to God. The angelic choir sang at His birth a 3-point message: "Glory to God, Peace on Earth,

Good will among mankind." The goal of all Christian activity is to bring glory to God, by establishing reconciliation - vertical and horizontal - and by working towards the welfare of all people. The process of educating all is to ensure their welfare – goodwill!

### III. Mobilizing School Planting Missions:

Christian contribution toward education in India is acknowledged by even those who are opposed to Christian mission in India. The elite and rich families, the political leadership, the governmental and diplomatic servants and everyone else have benefited from Christian educational services. They praise the educational input that Christian schools have given to them. They wish to place their children also in Christian schools, even to learn of Jesus and His teachings, but do not see the need to join the church community over against their own sociological communities and historic faiths. The sentiments of the Indian mind are well expressed by Rabindranath Tagore in his poem from *Gitanjali*:

WHERE the mind is without fear and the head is held high;

Where knowledge is free;

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;

Where words come out from the depth of truth;

Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;

Where the mind is led forward by these into ever-widening thought and action

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

Education that liberates brings people into that heaven of freedom to live and let live. Certainly, the earlier mission history has ample record of the educational contribution. The contemporary mission story continues to contribute educational input into India. In the post-colonial period, there was a period of uncertainty when the church wished to pass on the educational responsibility to the national and state governmental authorities. I remember the agony in the minds of my people when church schools were closed down in the 1960s. However, the government efforts in education did not provide satisfactory service and output. The call of the nation was for quality education from the private sector. During the early 1980s, an editorial in *India Today* openly invited private initiatives in education to take a hold of the educational task and to develop the Indian democracy into a better shape. Hence, the churches of India should continue their educational mission.

Alongwith the emphasis for "church planting missions," the Church in mission should arouse a clear mandate for "school planting missions" all across India. Quality education is the cry of the hour. With the splendid record we hold already and improving our image tarnished by elitism, high fees, capitation fees, and commercialization, we should march into the future, persisting in our role of providing selfless, sacrificial, and qualitative education that will build a better future for all.



**End Notes :**

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## Chapter - XIV

### CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION TO THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION AS NATION BUILDING

**C**hristian Theological Education and Nation Building might, at first, seem to be quite contrary to each other, and for too long the evidence would seem to indicate that this is the case. On the other hand, Christians have contributed much, over the last couple of centuries, to the welfare and construction of India.<sup>1</sup> For example, Christian Day School education has been highly prized by all sections of Indian society for more than 100 years; by none more so, than the middle and upper class elite. Why is it that there is so much pushing and shoving to get children admitted to the best Christian schools? Surely it is because our day school education is value-based. Parents admire and resonate with the way we do things. Any school can provide adequate instruction in maths, the sciences, social studies and geography. It is the development and training in the habits of obedience, honesty, reverence, fair play, self-



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respect, and the respect for others, which parents are after. These values are given priority and are foundational in all our day schools. Moreover, could we not say they are nurtured and disciplined into the character of students until they truly become habits, a lifestyle, and a genuine expression of their identity. Some of the greatest contributions to the nation have come from men and women educated in Christian schools.

I am not convinced that present day theological education is equally value-based, or that our faculty and staff are providing the true-life models that our students urgently need to think with the mind of Christ, or to behave in ways that bring glory to God. For one thing, I believe that theological educators are far too busy; too busy for things that matter most. It is well that we remember the old English proverb that says, "If you chase two rabbits, both will escape." Present-day theological training seems to suffer from want of focus. To be clear, the focus of graduating students who have been mentored in such a way as to make a significant difference for Christ in the church and in society, bringing to both the salt and light of Jesus.

In September 2005 one of my students, Jaichand, wrote a paper which I thought was impressive. So much so, that I felt it was worth sharing with a wider audience. With a few editorial alterations and additions, here is Mr Jaichand's paper:

For India, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is about change. We stand on the threshold of tremendous transformation that promises to launch India into the minority of elite nations who possess global power and influence. At this crucial juncture, it becomes imperative for all Christians to take note of the changing realities and to adapt ourselves and the role that we as leaders and nation builders, of this new India, will play. This needs a new and innovative approach to

the leadership of the church. For this, and to be effective, we will need to embrace the values and characteristics of biblical and spiritual leadership.

What then must theological education focus on in order for its graduates to become effective agents for the transformation and building of our nation, this in the face of the ancient and all permeating caste system; the bane of India? Then there is the issue of regionalism. The polarization of the Indian society, secessionist movements, militancy, and terrorism are all examples of the dangers of parochialism and regional polarization. Lastly, there is the challenge of globalization. This promises many things: development, equal employment opportunities, better administration and more profit. However, the reality for India remains that, even in 2006, the poor and the marginalized still live in comparatively abject poverty, and under bitter and dehumanizing discrimination.

This, then, is a clarion call to all Christians. How, then, should we live? Moreover, what core values, standards of behaviour, and competencies must we inculcate and teach in our theological institutions to produce effective leaders and influential Christians, able to contribute meaningfully to the building of the church in India and, at the same time, the nation? These two goals are interrelated and are, in fact, the natural extension of the great commission that we have received from Christ.

Theological Education in India, by and large, focuses too much on imparting information. It is knowledge-driven. While this commitment to academic achievement is commendable, the question remains, what are we aiming at? Will a scholar who specializes on John's Gospels be able to impact our nation? The answer, of course, is probably no. But



these are the types of men and women that many, if not most, theological institutions graduate year after year. Even a cursory survey of seminary graduates shows that many do not possess the gifts, competencies, or the passion to affect the transformation of the church in India, or the nation. Let us begin then by recognizing that something is lacking. We believe that the answer may lie in the primary purpose of theological education in India. The focus is often on cognitive knowledge and not on character transformation or on providing students with leadership skills and dreams for the future significance of their lives. The sad results are that many become lethargic and apathetic and, in the end, care very little for the growth of the church, or for the affairs of the nation. Yet these are the leaders of tomorrow. We must return to the basics in our theological education; to the foundational aspects of how to live in our 21st Century world, as Christians. What then are these qualities?

The first and foremost quality we must seek is excellence. Excellence is the pursuit, achievement and maintenance of values and standards that are desired of us by God. It is the state of being the best at whatever God calls us to be. According to Dr. Graham Houghton, "excellence is more than competence. It is striving for the highest possible standards."<sup>2</sup> Competence is a high degree of skill or ability. But excellence has to do with superlative behaviour. If theological education in India desires to be effective, that is, Biblical, relevant to the Indian milieu, life transforming and influential, then every aspect of the student experience, namely the course content, the spiritual exercises, the core values, the relationships with faculty and administrative staff, must all be focused on one thing; to know Christ and the power of His resurrection. If this is achieved,

what an incredible difference for Christ it will make in the Church and in the nation. The price for such excellence, of course is high. But the benefits outweigh the costs.

Biblical integrity is next in the order of importance. It can be understood as holiness of character that is consistent with the moral and ethical requirements of God as revealed in His Word and taught by our Lord Jesus Christ. While we were discussing the issue of integrity in class a few years ago, a teacher told me that there are three things that I must not touch; God's glory, God's money, and another man's wife. I have never forgotten this. Integrity is to be highly valued as we live in a country where it is rare and not easy to find, even among Christian leaders. In fact, there are many examples of Christian leaders all over the world as well as in India, who have brought low God's name; who have used God's money for their own selfish benefit, and whose sexual infidelities have disgraced us all.

Sadly, for the most part, we Indian Christians sit by and sanctimoniously look the other way for the words sex and sexuality are taboo. Being sexually faithful in mind and body to our spouses is an integral part of our obedience to Christ. Ours is a magnificent calling. Hence this aspect of integrity must be taught again and again in our Seminaries and Bible Colleges. For the most part Christians, including theological students, pick up their moral and sexual values from the world, the school playground and the internet as lamentably these issues are not dealt with in Church nor are they specifically taught in the process of theological education.

In general in India, the common man expects Christians to be people of the highest integrity. The reminder, then, of Oswald J. Sanders is appropriate.

He says, "The spiritual leader should be a man of unchallengeable morality."<sup>3</sup> Surely these are the standards of the legacy that the older generation of missionaries and Christians have handed down to us. And what a legacy it is! We must seek to recapture it in fullness, and theological training must play a major part.

Then there is the matter of our accountability. All of us are accountable to God. This is very clear. But are we accountable to each other? In the context of theological education, students are accountable to the Principal and Faculty. However, is the Faculty accountable to the students? Accountability must be a core value for us all. If we are to be agents of change in 21<sup>st</sup> century India, we must make a habit of being accountable, always and everywhere. This, in turn, means we must become open to feedback and the observations of colleagues. We must strive to be a people where constructive criticism is given and received with an open mind, in the spirit of love and humility. An accountable and influential leader will be recognized as the one who takes responsibility when things don't go as planned. Only this breed of leader will be a part of the transformation of India for Christ.

Obedience to Jesus Christ, excellence, biblical integrity, and accountability are the bedrock of the values that we need to have in place before anything else. Once these are well-established, the others are within reach.

Following these is true Christian love. What is Christian leadership without love? A body without a heart is dead. So also is a Christian leader without love. This does not just mean showing God's love to non-Christians, but to one another in the household of faith. This is a command of Jesus,

"Love each other as I have loved you," John 15.12. And yet, for us in India, this is a difficult thing to do; and unfortunately becomes even more challenging in the upper echelons of Christian leadership. Another disturbing practice that needs to change is the promotion of regionalism among theological institutions. Students, and sadly sometimes even faculty, are more concerned about maintaining regional identity at the cost of Christian brotherhood and the oneness of the Body of Christ; whereas the command of Jesus is that we love one another. We must return to this most fundamental of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

For India is watching us and it is by our love for one another that the peoples of India will know whether or not we are the followers of Jesus. The present times are filled with people who are reaching out for genuine, self-sacrificing love. This love is found only in Christ. When we exhibit this love from our hearts towards one another, and to the nation, I believe that India can be transformed into something beautiful, unheard of and yet unseen; a Christian nation governed by the love of Christ. Here I would ask, what is the practical application of such love? When we see the poor and the marginalized, does their suffering touch my heart? Do I yearn for their emancipation? How long must the victims of caste oppression walk with heads and heart bowed down? How long must people live without dignity, self-esteem, or self-respect? For how long must farmers commit suicide because of debt? How can we help? We must respond with positive action. John Henry Jowett expressed it beautifully; "The final verdict upon life will be founded, not upon our own success in gaining a chief seat, but upon our success in encouraging the faint, the weak, the



broken-hearted, and the suppressed."<sup>4</sup> How much we need to repent!

Closely related to the theme of Christian love is commitment to the family. The number of Christian leaders whose families have suffered because of their negligence is appalling! A friend of mine, a pastor's son, told me that he chooses not to believe in God because He took his father away from him. We must not sacrifice our families in exchange for our business in the ministry. For as Paul reminded Timothy, "If a man cannot manage his own household, how can he take care of God's church?" 1 Timothy 3.4-5. We owe a great debt to our spouses and children. How many marriages and children must be sacrificed on the altar of business for the Lord, before we realize the cost is too high? When was the last time we told our spouse that we love them, and really meant it? How many future generations of Christian leaders are we losing because our children do not enter into ministry because of the bitterness and the hurt they experience because when they needed us the most, we were busy elsewhere? We must establish a healthy and positive balance between family and ministry commitments.

The lives of the followers of Jesus are to be characterized by selflessness, sacrifice, and servanthood. Today we are surrounded by Christian leaders who know very little about being servants. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, power-centred leadership has become quite a norm in the Indian Church. Too often, only lip service is given to our calling to servanthood. Yet it is here that we can make a transforming change and reject the temptation of embracing power, prestige, and position. Howard Young says of Jesus, "His concept

of the leader as a servant reveals a pattern of leadership that embraces deep humility, disregards personal agendas, and puts others first."<sup>5</sup> I have often seen a subtle desire for power rather than influence and success rather than significance, in the lives of students and faculty of theological institutions where future leaders are being trained. How much this contrasts with the servanthood that Jesus practised. I am convinced that if we fail to understand what it means to be servants of Jesus, we will never have the influence we pray for upon the nation.

Christian patriotism is something that is hardly even heard or talked about in our theological institutions. However, by patriotism I do not mean blind nationalism, but a Christ-centred love for the nation of India. It is a sad fact that among many Christians, there is very little active love for the nation. The accusation of the Hindu fundamentalists about a lack of patriotism among Christians keeps haunting my soul. I am ashamed to say, there are many Christian brothers and sisters who do not even know the national anthem! We must remember that we are part of the nation of India, not by accident, but by the sovereign will of God. This must motivate all Christians, in these decisive times, to realize that not only is our calling to build the Church, but that we have a strategic responsibility to contribute to the building of the nation. This means that Christians must become involved at the very grassroots of society. It means something as basic as casting our vote. I am shocked that many Bible College students I talk to have not voted in years, if ever! How can we claim to love India, if we do not fulfil this most basic of all democratic civic duties?

My own desire is that Christians be awakened to realize that we can demonstrate our patriotism and

make a difference by engaging in things and issues that benefit all the people of India; that makes politicians more accountable; that seeks to root out the "babu" culture and usher in a more efficient administration; that permits every citizen of India to assert one's fundamental rights.

The foremost concern for me is to be of influence in the shaping of the future of India. Christian leaders must become influential at the policy-making level in Indian politics. This means becoming politically proactive. We must influence political processes by educating people, Christians and non-Christians alike, to choose competent leaders who are deeply committed to the progress of India. I also envision a time when more Christian leaders themselves enter politics to be a positive influence in the higher echelons of Indian affairs.

For this to happen, our theological institutions must start inculcating into the hearts and minds of our future Indian leaders, a deep sense of love, responsibility, and a genuine awareness of India. I think this could be done in a two-pronged manner. First, on a formal level, we must introduce into our curricula, courses that deal with the practical nuances of nation building. This entails, teaching the history and importance of the Freedom Struggle and the Christian contribution towards it. There must be occasions for reflection concerning the present state of Indian society and its most desperate needs; along with learning methods and practices to meet these needs. Secondly, this means training grassroot level Christian missionaries in administering education, medical care and hygiene, and training in the setting up of self-help groups, helping to empower the weak, the oppressed, the dalit, the child laborer, the girl child who is forgotten

and abused, and the victims of terrorism. In other words, to be practical and visionary leaders in the communities where they minister. This is nation building. There must be more research and synergy between various Christian organizations, churches, and leaders. Moreover, all these things can be done, not with the primary objective of winning converts, but with genuine Christian love for India. The paradox is that when that becomes so, multitudes of Indians will want to become followers of Jesus.

What am I saying? The ethos of theological education must encourage Christian patriotism. The immediate goal must be to instil a sense of pride and of belonging to the nation. The ultimate goal is the meaningful unity of India where regional rivalries and identities are reconstituted so that there is diversity of cultural and regional expression, but without aggression. This can only be done by the influence of Christian leaders of theological institutions who are committed to seeing an India that is free from hatred and stratification; an India that is diverse in culture and tradition, language and people groups, but is truly united as one nation. Let us be proud to be Indian Christian patriots.

Lastly, while we want to uphold the uniqueness of Christ and the authority of the Scriptures, we must work at being relevant. This is a must in the Indian scenario and we must constantly upgrade our knowledge and information. I long for a time when every graduate of a theological institution will be a person who is in touch with the times. This means a conscious effort must be made to read, exploit all sources of media, and to learn to couple this with a strategic mindset for the best way of communicating the Gospel relevantly and in any context. Oswald J. Sanders says, "Leaders should immerse



themselves in books that equip them for higher service and leadership in the Kingdom of God.<sup>6</sup> To this I add that any source of information, including the Internet, must be mastered in order for us be aware of what is going on and to become influential leaders in India. This is imperative. For this to occur, we will have to make changes. After all, without change there can be no progress.

I cry out to God to transform and translate us from the clutches of mediocrity and apathy towards our nation lest we be dismissed by the majority as an irrelevant and obscure minority!

Jaichand is young, but he has written emphatically from experience and from a graduate student's point of view. We began by talking about education being a training ground in the development of values and the habits of honesty, reverence, self-respect, et cetera. Jaichand has developed his case by focusing on excellence, biblical integrity, accountability, Christian love, lives characterized by genuine Christ-like servanthood, Christian patriotism, and relevance. I believe the way forward for us clearly rests in our ability as a community to develop, nurture, and enhance these values until they become habits of a way of life. Surely such a life-style will bring glory to God.

I would just want to add one thing. I believe our theological programmes must place a greater emphasis upon building strong Christian families and households, for the family is the most basic building block of any society. No nation is greater or stronger than its collective families. The Lord God has instituted the family to be a reflection of His desired relationship with mankind.

Therefore, we need to be training our students, both married and unmarried, comprehensively in the basics

of the Christian home, relationships between husband and wife, parents and children and how a truly Christian home ought to function in the Indian context. For the truth is, if we who are the followers of Jesus live differently from those who are not, we will make an incredible impact on the nation of India – and beyond. By contrast, if we lose it with respect to the family, we will at the same time lose our credibility and the right to be heard.

In regard to all that has been said here, I am of the opinion that most present Bible Schools, Seminaries and Theological Institutes in India would only receive a C+ grade when it comes to awaking and sensitizing our students to the Christian duty and responsibility of nation building. The fact that our students, both men and women, upon graduation will be called to participate in the building of the nation, is a discussion almost completely unheard of. We must become proactive and intentional about making changes to remedy urgently the way we go about our business. Such a restructuring would also include such emphases being taken on board by the Asia Theological Association and the Serampore Senate.

Should we prefer the comfort of the status quo, we are going to lose the opportunities so wonderfully offered to us at the present time. And this in the face of the fact that India itself is shaking off its decades-old inertia; expressing a willingness to change, becoming dynamic and looking for greater things for all in the future. We, too, must take a road less travelled so far, and do the same.

**End Notes**

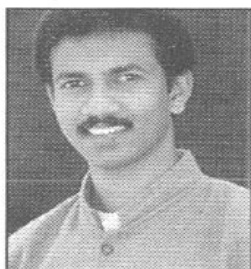
- <sup>1</sup> See my other article in this publication, "The Christian Impact upon India; a study of Nation Building." pp?
- <sup>2</sup> Christian Leadership; Selected Readings, ed. Graham Houghton, (Bangalore: SAIACS, 2005), p.126
- <sup>3</sup> Oswald J. Sanders, Spiritual Leadership, (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute, 1994; reprint, Secunderabad: OM Books, 2004), p.41.
- <sup>4</sup> John Henry Jowett, A Daily Meditation, revised by Graham Houghton and Carol Houghton (Bangalore: SAIACS, 2005), p.298.
- <sup>5</sup> Howard Young, "Rediscovering Servant Leadership." Christian Leadership; Selected Readings, ed Graham Houghton (Bangalore: SAIACS, 2005) p.77.
- <sup>6</sup> Oswald J Sanders, Spiritual Leadership, p.105.

## Chapter - XV

### CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION TO HEALTHCARE IN INDIA

In a country dominantly shaped by the different traditions of Hinduism and other religions, Christianity is statistically insignificant as it represents a relatively strong minority. However, their contribution to the betterment of the country is outstanding. From the very beginning, philanthropic work has been an integral part of missionary adventure. The early missionaries faced innumerable challenges in the Indian field. Much of their money, energy, and time were spent on such expensive enterprises like medicine and health care. Consequently, the missionaries established various hospitals and medical colleges that stand out in India today.

At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was insufficiency of medical facilities in India. The government services were mostly limited to official stations and therefore vast areas were wholly unaffected by the medical facilities. People were deeply rooted in prejudices. In India as a whole, crude death rate was



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very high. Missionaries were able to take a small amount of Western medical supplies into places where it did not reach otherwise. The successive service of missionaries like Thomas and Robert Nesbit were able to save lives through their medical skills. It attracted peoples afflicted with various sicknesses. Yet, some others did not allow missionaries to attend their sickness until all their means had failed. At this crucial point, mission hospitals in India launched its service, providing medical treatment, caring for those terribly neglected or given maltreatment.

In a rapidly changing political and social scenario, the pioneering efforts of Christians are not credited. Besides this, the patriotism of Christians is being doubted. Christians' distinctive involvement in this medical field is not known much since it is not well written about. Therefore, this is an attempt to unfold the rich heritage of Christians in contributing to the health care in India. It traces back to history, the health care prevailing in India prior to the advent of missionaries, and then it explores health care done by the missionary pioneers both men and women who initiated this venture by briefly highlighting their specialization in the medical field. This also draws the attention to some of the Christian medical associations that function in India unitedly. Finally, it concludes with some achievements of Christians in this field.

### **Healthcare through the Centuries**

It is striking to see how the missionaries have tried to improve the then existing health care. The background will shed light on the scenario where they began this adventure.

### **Ancient India**

Indigenous forms of medicine existed in India from very ancient times. In one of the four Vedas, the basic scriptures of Hinduism, an elaborate discourse on the system of disease, their diagnosis, and prescriptions for their treatment is given. The treatment consisted of a strict dietary restriction. The Brahmins who were the custodians of the Vedas alone had the right to practise this system of medicine. Therefore, the poor, middle class, and lower class people could not benefit from it.

In the villages, people were animists. They regarded sickness as the manifestation of the displeasure of supernatural forces and attempts were, therefore, made to placate the spirits that have been offended. This has given rise to an elaborate system of sacrifices and rituals. Behind the whole process is the belief that man has to keep peace and be in harmony with the powers of nature and that a break in this relationship can have serious consequences. The village Pujari wielded immense influence, especially in times of sickness and death. Worse treatments were employed in an effort to expel it.<sup>1</sup> The inadequacy of the existing health care system and the urgent need for alternatives had been increasingly recognized.

### **The British Period**

The Western system of medicine was introduced to serve the British soldiers and civilians stationed in India. The benefits of this system hardly reached the masses. Especially in villages, next to nothing was done to facilitate better sanitation or to prevent disastrous epidemic outbreaks. There was a striking gap between the traditional system of medicine and the Western system of cure in the British period and between

professional ideals and implementation. The majority of India's population was far out of reach of basic health care. The problem of health care remained unsolved in all its intensity and complexity.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Post-Independence India**

In the Independent India, the government was confronted with a choice of expanding the health services alongwith the patterns set by the British or to make it accessible to the ordinary masses. The national leaders urged themselves to focus more on the health needs of the villagers. However, the political leadership opted to perpetuate the British tradition of an urban, curative, and privileged-class orientation of health services. The Government developed the Western health care system modelled by the Britishers, meeting the aspirations and needs of the upper and middle classes at the expense of suppressing the poor and the marginalized.<sup>3</sup>

Of late, the emphasis is being given to catering to the urgent need of reaching out to the vast and more needy rural population to ensure a balance between rural and urban areas. In the case of government budget, the 80% of the poor population get only 40% of the budget and while the rich who constitute only 20% get 60%.<sup>4</sup> The meagre improvement and imbalance in resource distribution are the cause for the scandalous inequalities in the health care. It took time to realize that a large portion of the population had been neglected.

At this complexity of health issues, the early pioneering Christian missionaries brought scientific medicine. This sense of urgency prepared missionaries for self-sacrifice, to work among these people which made them contribute richly to the health care. Missionaries had to face this appalling reality. Early

Christians devoted their lives to raising health standards. Initially, their work brought them into direct conflict with the native medicine men (*vaidyan*). The medical concepts they introduced often clashed with cherished cultural traditions. However, setting aside the fierce opposition and hostility, the Christian doctors had to contend with the horrors of superstitious maltreatment of the sick and ignorance, all of which seriously hampered their efforts to improve health conditions. With the beginning of missionary hospitals and dispensaries, native doctors were trained and appointed to improve the shortage. In contrast to the British government in India whose sole aim was their own political and economic gains, the missionaries were concerned about the development of our country - our people. Christian hospitals were popular, just because they developed adequate health care programmes even in remote areas where the government could not reach.

### **Pioneer Medical Missionaries**

The main focus of Christianity is the total well-being of the people as the people are more precious. Health care is an integral part of overall development. Some of the early missionaries were well-equipped doctors. Initially, they served in hospitals established by the Portuguese and were reserved for the military. Beside this, the Jesuits maintained in their homes an infirmary to care for the sick. People generally underwent suffering without relief. Missionaries saw the need and acted to meet the felt needs. Seclusion of women and prejudices were strong reason for commencing medical work among women. Therefore, women doctors served in India to rescue the women.

### **Male Missionary Doctors**

The Jesuits had established a hospital for the poor in Goa as early as 1576. Followed by them, John Thomas

started his work in 1793 as he came to India as William Carey's colleague. Then John Taylor at Madras in 1805, John Scudder in 1819, and John Steele in 1836 at Madura had began their medical work respectively. Beside this, in 1842, William Glen went to Mirzapur and John Newton to Punjab to begin their medical work.<sup>5</sup> John Scudder started his medical school in Vellore. Two of his sons joined him in 1851. The London Mission started their medical work in Neyyoor in 1838. Medical mission established hospitals in the densely populated southern half of Travancore, most of them in places where no government hospitals were available. The south Travancore Medical Mission started in 1838 when little or no medical work of any kind was being done by government or other agencies in India. In 1840, American Baptists had two medical evangelists working in South Bengal. Ludhiana, in Punjab, was another centre.

In 1860, The Scottish United Presbyterian Mission began its work in Rajasthan, establishing dispensaries and later hospitals at Bewar, Ajmer and some other stations. The church missionary society established a medical mission in Srinagar in 1864. The same society had several hospitals in Punjab. Griffiths was the first medical missionary to open a dispensary at Mawphlang, Shillong in 1878. Followed by him, A.D. Hughes started medical work in 1887. Medical missions have built a rich heritage by serving the most needy people.

### **Female Missionary Doctors**

The need arose for female doctors as Indian women resisted being attended to by male doctors. A new chapter in medical field opened up when the qualified lady doctors committed their life for the work among women. The social customs like *purdah* kept women in strict isolation from men and women were not allowed to be examined by a male physician. Moreover, they



refused to get admitted to hospitals where male patients were also admitted. Zenana Bible and Medical Mission took up the challenge in response to the isolated position of women who lived in zenana. The first Zenana missionary to reach Benaras (now Varanasi) was a young Cooper in 1857. The Zenana Mission opened a permanent work in 1867. In the pioneering stage, there was no blueprint for a health policy, nor any planning to direct the health workers. Studies made by N. Kabir and T.N. Krishnan show that, in Calicut the first hospital for women was established by the Basel Mission 1899 and only in 1905 did the government open hospitals for women at Calicut.<sup>6</sup> Christian missions began a conscious development of health care activities.

Medical missions of CMS started their venture in Srinagar, Kashmir in 1864. In 1870, American Missions send out a fully qualified lady doctor, Clara Swain. She was the first woman doctor who began her work at Bareilly in Utter Pradesh where a women's hospital was opened in 1874. Sara Seward of American Presbyterian Mission started her mission in 1871 at Allahabad. In 1884, Elizabeth Bielby followed her and opened a medical work at Lucknow. Several hospitals for women and children were built under the auspices of the Zenana and Bible medical mission and the church of England Zenana mission. Very soon medical training was attached to the Christian hospitals.<sup>7</sup> In Ludhiana, the medical work was started in 1881, by Greenfield sisters and Martha Rose. This pioneering medical work of the Greenfield sisters, was continued by Edit Mary Brown who joined them in 1893. By 1932, there were more women doctors than men in mission hospitals.

### **Christian Nurses**

Christians made an outstanding contribution in training nurses who rendered their excellent service to

the people. Generally, nursing used to be looked down upon as a menial work fit only for the uneducated girls. For many years, Indian Christians were almost the only candidates for nursing profession. Others were afraid to step in to this profession. According to C.B. Firth, "As late as the beginning of the Second World War, it was estimated that about ninety per cent of all nurses in the country, male and female, were Christians, and that about eighty per cent of these had been trained in Mission Hospitals."<sup>8</sup> Since then, the girls of other communities also began to find employment as nurses. Christians led the way in this important field. For Christian nurses, it was a sense of duty and dedication who rendered a remarkable service in this field.

### **Medical Educational Institutions**

The medical work required trained doctors, nurses and compounders. Therefore, medical missions started to fill the gap. As early as 1862, the London Missionary Society had established a medical school at Neyyoor to train medical subordinates. The Agra Medical Mission Training Institute was begun in 1881 by Valentine of the United Presbyterian Mission. Another ambitious project was the North Indian School of Medicine founded in 1894 by Edin Brown and Greenfield at Ludhiana, which eventually got affiliated to the Punjab University. Initially, it was aimed at training women alone. In 1952, the name was changed to Christian Medical College to enable it to admit both men and women students. This medical school, in course of time, became a full-fledged medical college training doctors, compounders, and nurses, which was affiliated to the Punjab University. They offered educational facilities to young men and women irrespective of religion, caste, and community. Similarly, in Miraj, Christian Medical School was established in 1897 by William J. Wanless. It was primarily designed to train men to be hospital assistants and it flourished to

become a hospital. In 1917, it was registered by the Bombay University.<sup>9</sup>

Medical education was an early Christian innovation at colleges like Christian Medical College, Vellore, founded by Ida Scudder. While the government medical colleges were offering diplomas, CMC had grown up to providing M.B. and B.S. Degrees, affiliated to the Madras University. In 1945, Christian Medical College, Vellore was established and that became the single biggest hospital in Asia. Both CMCs, Vellore and Ludhiana, became the two colleges focusing chiefly on training qualified doctors. Through education, these colleges made a distinctive contribution to the health standards of all communities of our nation with special emphasis on health care in the unreached rural areas in India. Christian hospitals were beyond any calculable value. Through this, the number of Indian doctors gradually increased. Even today, the medical enterprise now chiefly depends on some of the excellent Christian-run institutions for qualified doctors and nurses both men and women.

### **Christian Doctors in Specialization**

Christian medical missions developed work in specialized areas like women and treatment for eye diseases. Mission hospitals in Vellore, Neyyoor, Miraj, and Ludhiana became well-known for their surgery and earned a great reputation for eye operation. Tuberculosis and leprosy are both serious health problems in the treatment as well as in research the Christians made a significant contribution. For all these, a huge infrastructure of hospitals, nursing homes, medical colleges, dispensaries and subsidiary centres have been built. In the tribal settings, the architecture is more of user-friendly and suiting their system, but ensuring proper standards.

### **Treatment of Tuberculosis**

The disease, tuberculosis, is due to poor nutrition, the crowded environment, and unsanitary conditions under which people live. By 1935, there were mini Christian hospitals in India exclusively devoted to this treatment. The largest of this was the Union Mission T.B. Sanatorium, at Arogyavaram in Andhra Pradesh, founded as a co-operative venture by fourteen missions. It is not only one of the premier institutions of India for treatment of tuberculosis, but a place where government and mission doctors received post-graduate training. It was quick to achieve a leading position both in treatment and research. Its first superintendent C. Frimedt Moeller of the Danish Mission and his successor P.V. Benjamin were advisers to the government of India on tuberculosis. Besides this, there are now eleven other mission T.B. Sanatoria in different parts of India.<sup>10</sup>

### **Working Among Lepers**

The leprosy patients were the unfortunate people who would have no future. They were ostracized from society, often found in the streets of the cities, begging for alms. They were neglected in toto as leprosy was considered incurable. Few people would hardly dare touch a leper, but the medical missionaries lovingly rendered their service at their risk. Caring for leprosy patients were a highly specialized field of Christian service. In 1900s, the only service available to the affected patients were mission leprosaria and in cities, sometimes there was a *dharmasala* which offered sometimes food and shelter. Moved by the pathetic plight of leprosy patients, William Carey was the first one to start an asylum for leprosy patients in Calcutta. Many homes for leprosy patients were founded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Through this, a great number of leprosy patients in India were benefited. Wellesley Baily was a missionary noted for this. He founded a mission to leprosy patients



and took care of about 600 leprosy patients in Purulia in West Bengal and Dichpalli in AP at the turn of the century. Robert G. Cochrane was another man who was the superintendent of a leading leprosy sanatorium at Chingleput in South India. The Research and Training Centre of the Mission to Lepers at Karigiri near Vellore makes an increasing contribution to the anti-leprosy campaign.<sup>11</sup>

In early days, Ernest Fritschi states, "The only treatment available then was the use of Hydnocarpus oil (later the ester of the oil which was easier to inject on account of its lesser viscosity). Patches sometimes faded but diffuse lepromatous leprosy did not change."<sup>12</sup> Only very few doctors were scientifically trained for proper treatment. Fritschi further says, "Among them were several Christian doctors including Muir and Rogers - in the Tropical Disease Hospitals in Calcutta and in the vicinity of the mission leprosaria, which had sprung up in endemic areas."<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, deformities are being dealt with physiotherapy and reconstructive surgery. In all this work, Christians pioneered the work and still play a leading role in India.

### **Mental Diseases and Polio**

A long felt need was to care for the mental patients. Even for this, Christians came forward to take up the treatment for mental diseases. Psychiatric clinics at Lucknow, Miraj, and Vellore in this respect have begun the work.

Christian doctors initiated for the prevention of polio, mainly worked out with Christian Medical College. This was a high level of specialization.

### **Medical Associations**

As the Christian hospitals and medical institutions have increased around India, different associations were



formed to promote a quality service and to undertake new venture. Together, they were able to achieve more than what they could gain as individuals.

### **Christian Medical Association of India**

A Medical Missionary Association was formed in 1905, by a group of missionary doctors which blossomed in 1926 into the Christian Medical Association of India (CMAI). CMAI is a large influential body associated with government, having over 350 institutional members and 5,000 individual members - doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, health administrators, and chaplains. It has proved an ideal umbrella for controlling and developing paramedical education which now has a special section for Laboratory Technician Training, undertaking service to the whole country.

The members of CMAI contributed in the fields of leprosy, blindness control, nursing education, and community health through its comprehensive involvement. The CMAI, for the last 15 years, is working to prevent and control HIV/AIDS. The situation is worse in India especially in sexually active and economically productive age group of 18 - 40 years. The association has been able to improve on screening centres for HIV testing, and training laboratory technicians and others about blood safety procedures.<sup>14</sup> It (CMAI) is the central consultative and advisory body for the Christian medical enterprise in India. By its journal, its conferences, and the activities of its staff of secretaries, it disseminates information and ideas and provides a forum where the issues can be discussed and solved.

### **Catholic Hospitals Association of India**

The Roman Catholic Church has a large number of hospitals and dispensaries. Mary Glowery brought out the idea for this association. This was formed at Guntur and officially registered in 1944 at Nagpur. Nursing

schools, training facilities for lab technicians and pharmacies exist in most of these institutions.

### **Emmanuel Health Association**

The Emmanuel Hospital Association (EHA) was founded in India in 1970 as an indigenous Christian medical mission for the people of North India. It provides medical services to the people of rural, urban, central, and north India. Throughout North India, EHA helps all the seventeen hospitals associated with it.<sup>15</sup> Apart from this, there are a number of other smaller associations having hospitals under them. Over all, they are noted for their professional excellence and efficient service.

Over the years, Christian hospitals have maintained a high status in India through their distinction of quality service. Moreover, a great number of Christians serving in government and private institutions have retained their loyalty and sense of service. They have accomplished a name for their quality service and excellent health care. Out of the five top medical colleges chosen by *India Today*, the leading Indian secular magazine mention two of them which are run by Christians.

One being the Christian Medical College, Vellore, managed by an interdenominational council of Protestant churches whereby it is ranked second and St John's Medical College, Bangalore managed by the CBCI Society of Medical Education is ranked the 5<sup>th</sup>.<sup>16</sup> This is the public witness of the significant contribution of Christians to the growth and development of health care in India. Writing about the immense social welfare activities of Christians, Lancy Lobo says that Christians run 774 hospitals, 1792 dispensaries and health centres, 136 leprosy centres, 102 rehabilitation centres and 466 homes for the aged and the destitute.<sup>17</sup> The beneficiaries belong to all castes and creeds.

As the years rolled by, the indigenous system declined with the quality of health care. Thus a survey in *Drishtikone* notes, "India, during the last 56 years, has witnessed the increase of life expectancy from 32 years to 64 years. Infant mortality which was 146 per 1000 live births in 1951 is now under 70."<sup>18</sup> This drastic change in the health care has been due to high share of quality service done by the Christians.

Inspite of this lasting impression the Christians have accomplished in the field of medicine and health care, often some non-Christian fanatics awarded them with murder. The ruthless killing of Graham Staines and his two little children in Orissa is an evidence to their black deeds. Staines was working among the poorest of the poor. He was involved in helping orphans and those suffering from the curse of leprosy. He was also a prominent figure when the Indian government launched a project to give polio vaccinations to every child in the country. Yet, Graham and his two kids were burnt alive. This kind of inhuman action will not shatter the attitude of Christians from their sacrificial service to our people.

In contrast to the medical system with undue emphasis on the curative aspects which tends mainly to be a profit-oriented business, Christians are outstanding for being service-oriented based on the real needs. The terrible inadequacy of medical facilities induces Christian missionaries to step into this field. Christians contributed to the introduction of Western medicine and reforms in sanitation and of public health measures. Missionaries opened hospitals and dispensaries in rural and urban areas for the service of the poor, marginalized and the underprivileged. In addition, they cared for persons with special needs, that is, those who were visually handicapped, those affected with leprosy and tuberculosis and the physically challenged. Amidst all stumblingblocks, Christians provided a quality service

so vital to improve the health. In all this, Christians worked towards excellence in the fields of health care, teaching, training, and research all the while keeping the common people's problem uppermost in mind.

The healthcare system corresponds to what happens in the whole society. The role of Christians, in general, was indispensable to shear down the mortality rate in India. India, as a whole, owes much to Christians for their selfless service to uplift the nation through medicine and health care. They played a role far out of proportion to the number of Christians in the over all population.

In view of all these facts, it is clear that the effect of Christianity upon the human race had increased. Christians would continue to be a source of fresh efforts to care for the sick, the broken, and the underprivileged. While the wide health inequalities still exist in our country, while even the access to essential health care is not possible in some places still, it is a continuous challenge for us to focus more on those who are denied these rights. To remain passive and silent makes us partly responsible for the continuation of the evils that exist in the field of health care. Quality services and reaching those poor and the marginalized, whose choice is between treatment or death, is a continuous challenge and topmost priority.

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## Chapter - XVI

### CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION TO INDIAN CULTURES

Culture is a very important aspect in anyone's life. Christian faith has contributed greatly to the Indian cultures.

We must differentiate between cultural pollution and cultural absorption. The Gandhara art and culture from the Greeks, the Kusana Kurta and pyjama, the Gandhi cap from the Middle East, and the word "Hindu" from the Persians, are types of cultural absorption.

Being an ardent promoter of our cultures, I am concerned at the ignorance of the Hindutva brigade on the plurality of our nations cultures. Therefore what seems "Pollution" for one culture may be altogether wholesome in another culture.

India had four distinct infra cultures on which stand about 40 major cultures and 960 subcultures. Therefore, when the Christian untouchable or the Christian Mongoloid tribal is accused of drifting away from the

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Indian culture., what exactly is meant by Indian culture?. It is wrongly presumed to be the Sanskrit culture. Why ask them to change from their native cultures to something alien to them, whatever Celtic or Sanskrit?

Very great harm is done by such imposition of one's culture over all others.

On the Christian contribution to Indian cultures, a few things are noteworthy. For instance, the linguistic history of India cannot be written without honouring the monumental pioneer works of Christians such as H.H Wilson (Sanskrit) Max Mueller (Rig Veda) Williams (Sanskrit – English dictionary) W.Reeve (English – Kannada Dictionary) Kittel (Kannada Grammar) Krshna Pillai (Tamil Poetry) Varghese Mappillai (Malayalam) Chowdry Purushottam (Telugu) Garum Joshua (Telugu) G.U Pope (Kural) 234. Caldwell (Dravidian Comparative Grammar) William Carey (Bengali) Nathan Brown and Miles Bronson (Assamese). 235. Dr.Gangadharan states that the Western interest in Indology and Sanskrit studies was primarily due to the advent of Christian missionaries.

Without a single exception, in pre-independent India, the analysis and reduction to writing of the scores of Indian tribal languages was the work of Christians. But for them, many of the tribal languages would have died of total neglect. Similarly, the modern educational history of India cannot be written without mentioning the pillars such as Alexander Duff, Wilson, Anderson, Hislop, and other pioneers.

One fact that is not widely known is the Christian contribution to temperance regarding liquor. While the white colonist was an ardent drinker, the white missionary was an ardent promoter of abstinence. Oddie documents the valiant efforts of Evans, Caine Bishop Pickett and others. By their efforts, by 1897, over 260 Christian temperance societies were formed across the length and breadth of the country.

However, the most significant Christian contribution culturally, in the last century was the conscientising and organizing of public action against sati, infanticide, untouchability and slavery.

Today not many are willing to swallow the unpleasant truth that the Indian Social Reform movement was initiated by Christian efforts. Gandhi wrote, "To this catagery belonged Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Devendra Nath Thakur, Keshub Chandra Sen. In Western India we had Dayanand Saraswathi. And numerous reformist associations like Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj that have sprung up in India today are doubtless the result of Christian influence.

Contrary to a very popular notion, the tribals are not detribalized by becoming Christians. Majumdar states: "With Christianisation, these (cultures) vitally remain because the tribals are allowed to retain all the customs except those which would imply a denial of Christian faith such as witchcraft or evil spirits. The tribal leader Dr Bareh emphasized the same. He stated, "Our claim is that Christianity is not spoiling our tribal selfhood, as is sometimes alleged. Instead Christ's teaching is enriching it in many ways. When we got the Bible, the prayer book and the hymn books in our languages, it was the very first time, in most cases that our languages had been reduced to writing. This represents a definite step in the preservation of our languages, the most treasured possession of our cultures."

The great anthropologist of Chotanagpur, Sarat Chandra Ray remarked, "The Christian missionaries wisely permitted their Oraon converts to retain their tribal customs, which did not conflict with the cardinal tenets of the Christian faith."

It must be noted that the rejection of the excrescence of a culture is not pollution. Preservation of

such excrescence is rather poison, Verrier Elwin, who called anything Christian as "cultural pollution" lived stoically among everything in the Gondi culture: untouchability, drunkenness, free sex, rampant venereal diseases and human sacrifice. For him, status quo was purity and he did everything to preserve it from Christian

'Pollution.' Lowang Cha, the Secretary General of the people's party of Arunachal Pradesh retorted to the accusation concerning Christians polluting the culture saying, "Don't I know my own culture? They want to Indianise us. I am an Indian already. My father went head hunting. Every year we have a festival around this. Should I start head hunting?" What is cultural pollution?

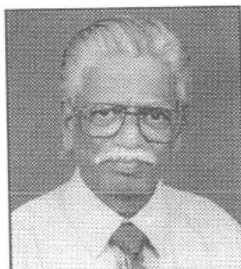
## Chapter - XVII

### CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION TO INDIAN MUSIC

It is a well-known fact that Mahatma Gandhi invited, once in while a while, Christian members of his Sabarmati Ashram to sing "Lead kindly Light," "Rock of Ages," and the like. His family and others sang these tunes in the time of the freedom struggle and they brought solace to him and the nation.

Music is a universal language. Music is the Speech of Angels. It is holy and divine. Christianity is associated with musicians and musical instruments since the dawn of its history. Missionaries have contributed a lot to the Indian Music by composing songs in Indian languages and compiling music books for the use of the Christian congregation and the society at large.

In the same manner, Christian Missionaries and Indian Christians brought inspiration to Indian music through songs they composed and translated into the vernacular languages of India, especially the ancient languages. Special mention should be made about Bartholomew Ziegenbalg, a German missionary, who



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came to Tranquebar in order to propagate the Gospel of Jesus in and around Tamil Nadu. This year, Christians will celebrate the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his coming to Tranquebar. Ziegenbalg arrived on the shores of Tranquebar on 9 July 1706. He was the first foreign Protestant missionary to come to Tranquebar to preach the Gospel. He founded a printing press and started a paper-manufacturing factory in Poraiyar near Tranquebar. He translated the Latin Bible into Tamil language and printed the Tamil Bible and distributed them to the people.

Ziegenbalg translated the heart-touching German songs into Tamil. Ziegenbalg also translated some of the songs that were written by the great Reformer, Martin Luther, into Tamil. In his letter dated 6 August 1713, he mentions the 2 editions of Tamil songbooks with western notation. The first Tamil Hymn Book was published in 1713 and its sixth edition in 1779. The Lutheran missionary Fabricius alone contributed 82 songs to this hymnal. In 1774, Fabricius printed a songbook with 348 hymns out of which 347 hymns were his own. 100 years after the publication of this hymn book a renowned Tamil Pandit gave tribute to Fabricious and praised this book as 'Heart Melting Songbook' (நெஞ்சருக்கி நூல்) (Herzchmelzer)

Here is an example of the heart melting lines from this hymnal.

ஆ, என் கல் நெஞ்சை நீ நன்றாய்  
உருக்கி, முழுவதும்  
புலம்பலுங் கண்ணீருமாய்  
கரையப் பண்ணவும்

(The Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Hymn Book - Fabricious Hymn Book with Tunes)

During the 16<sup>th</sup> century and later, great scholars and missionaries like Robert De Nobili, Constantine Joseph Beschi, Rev. G.U. Pope, Dr Caldwell, Rev. Rhenius,

Francis Whyte Elise, Rev. Percival came to India to spread Christianity and to do service to the people. They also did service to the growth of the regional languages by way of writing songs, books and grammar books. Robert De Nobili a native of Italy came to Tamilnadu in 1606 and after serving the Lord Jesus Christ for 50 years in India he died in Mylapore.

Constantine Joseph Beschi, an Italian, came to Madurai in AD 1700 and learned Tamil, Telugu, and Sanskrit. He learned Tamil from a poet called Supradeepak. He stayed in Tamil Nadu for 37 years. He also knew Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. He wrote a book called "Thembavani" (தேம்பாவணி), for which he was honoured for with title Veeramamunivar (திருக்காவலூர் கலம்பகம்). He also wrote Thirukavalur Kalambakam (திருக்காவலூர் கலம்பகம்), Keetheri Ammanai, (கீத்தேரி அம்மாளை) and Adaikalanayagi Venba (அடைக்கல நாயகி வெண்பா), which was written as a tribute to the Virgin Mary the Mother as she gave refuge to the Christian refugees in Thirukkavalur when they were driven away from Tanjore when it was ruled by the a ruler from Maharashtra.

Vedanayagam Sastriyar of Tanjore was born on 7<sup>th</sup> September 1774 in Tirunelveli to Mr.Devesagayam and Mrs. Gnanapoo. He was educated in Tirunelveli and worked as a Tamil pandit in a school at Tranquebar. He has written many songbooks for worship, which are listed below.

1. Gnanapathak Keerthanai (ஞானபதக் கீர்த்தனை)
2. Gnana Kummi (ஞான கும்மி)
3. Gnanathaalattu (ஞான தாலாட்டு)
4. Thiruchabai Thaalaattu (திருசபை தாலாட்டு)
5. Pralaba Oppari (ப்ரலாப ஒப்பாரி)
6. Sasthara Kummi (சாஸ்தாரக் கும்மி)
7. Thyana Pulambal (தியான புலம்பல்) etc.

Vedanayagam Sastriyar wrote a song book called *Jebamaalai* or Rosary of Prayers because they are intended to accompany daily morning and evening prayers. Part 1 consists of 31 *Jebamalaai* in number adopted for 31 days of the month setting forth the glories of the triune God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Part 2 contains hymns in the *Virtram* metre numerically arranged from 1 to 12 on the lines of the Scripture narrative. Like in the style of David and Asaph, Vedanayagam has inscribed his name in the end of each *Jebamaalai*, not from the motives of pride or vain glory but from a desire of being remembered at the throne of grace and also that the readers may know the author.

Vedanayagam Sastriyar was offered the following titles for his music ministry.

1. *Annavi* (அன்னாவி)
2. *Vethasiromani* (வேத சிற்றோமணி)
3. *Magagnana Kavichakravarthiyar* (மகா ஞான கவி சக்கிரவர்த்தியார்)
4. *Suviseda Kavirayar* (சுவிசேட கவிராயர்)
5. *Gnana Deepa Kavirayar* (ஞான தீபக் கவிராயர்)
6. *Veda Sasthriyar* (வேத சாஸ்த்திரியார்)

Vedanayagam Sastriyar was honoured on 18 June 1815 by Rev. Polo and other 27 dignitaries. He was offered the title "Doctor of Divinity" which literally means "Sastriyar." Because of his untiring effort, Rev. Edward Webb in his remark says, that Sastriyar is responsible for making the congregation sing *Keerthanas* in service. Most of the songs were the contributions of Sastriyar.

When the first Reformed Church was established in Tranquebar, the German Lutheran Missionaries met many hurdles. One of the hurdles was related to singing. According to the pandits, only people belonging to a particular caste should sing a particular raga. It was the tradition that was prevailing during that time. For example, *Bairavi* raga should be sung by Brahmins only.

*Megaviranji* should be sung by ladies belonging to Brahmin community only. *Thodi*, *Vasantham* ragas should be sung by people belonging to Vaishnava caste. *Koorcherry Bangalam* ragas are only to be sung by Sudras. Vedanayagam Sastriyar had a tough time erasing these differences among different castes. He played a crucial role in removing the differences and made everyone sing songs irrespective of caste or creed. For his *Bethlehem Kuravanji*, he was offered the title "Gnana Deepa Kavirayar" (ஞான தீப கவிராயர்) on the 18<sup>th</sup> September 1809 at St Matthias Church, Vepery, Chennai. Vedanayagam Sastriyar's 230<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary was celebrated on 2 September 2004 at CSI Missionary Chapel, Chennai. I should also mention H.A. Krishnapillai and Thanjai Abraham Pandithar who have done a yeoman service to the Tamil church in particular and the people of India at large.

H.A. Krishnapillai was born in Reddiyarpatti in Tirunelveli in 1827. His guru was a Vaishnavite who worked in a Christian school as a Tamil pundit. He was called as Thiruparkadal Nathakavirayar (திருப்பார்க்கடல்) when Krishnapillai was 30 years old, he took baptism and changed his name to Henry Albert. He wrote the book *Ratchanya Yathrigam* (ரட்சண்ய யாத்திரிகம்) based on *Pilgrim's Progress* written by John Bunyan. This book consists of 5 chapters and 4,000 stanzas which earned him the name "*Christian Kambar*" and "*Maha Vidhvan*." Dr R.P. Sethupillai, an eminent scholar in Tamil, has praised him for this splendid service to Tamil literature. Thanjai Abraham Pandithar has written a unique music book with the title "*Karuna Mirtha Sagaram*" (கருணா மிந்த சாகரம்). This is considered as a good theory book of music.

### Conclusion

Great scholar missionaries with great zeal for music and for spreading of God's message from abroad came to India. They learnt and mastered the regional

languages and spoke with fluency and went to the extent of writing songs in regional languages, translating songs from their mother tongue, writing grammar books and dictionaries. Though songs based on Carnatic ragas were used in those periods, missionaries like Ziegenbalg and others introduced Western music, which was quite new in India at that time. That was an important era in the history of the churches in India when people learnt to sing in parts and started composing songs and this made the congregation sing without difficulty. They also introduced new and modern musical instruments like piano, pipe organ, Hammond organ, violins, viola, guitar, piccolo, piano accordion, harp, etc.. We are greatly indebted to those servants of God for their contribution to the Indian music. May we thank and praise the Almighty for the enormous blessing from heaven we are enjoying everyday during worship services through songs of praise and songs of inspiration.

“Hold this seashell to your ear,  
And you shall hear,  
Not the anthem of the sea,  
Not the wild wind symphony,  
But your own heart's minstrelsy.  
You do poets and their song  
A grievous wrong,  
If your own heart does not bring  
To their deep imagining,  
As much beauty as they sing.

- Thomas Bailey Aldrich

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## **Chapter - XVIII**

### **CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION TO HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES**

In the early nineteenth century, a western Christian missionary arrived in India. When he was traveling from Bombay to Lucknow, he was seated next to an educated Mohammedan. So he started his missionary work right away by reading to him from his Bible, the Sermon on the Mount. When he finished, the Mohammedan softly replied: "Yes, we have the same thing in the Koran." Whether it was true or not, he tried to get rid of the uniqueness of the Christian faith. Mahatma Ghandi, the father of India, was a strong believer in Christ's Sermon on the Mount, adding it into Hinduism, and hoping to build India along the principles of Christ. Indian leaders and the men and the women of our motherland cannot deny the fact that the Christian missionaries and the native Christian leaders laid the foundation, from the first century, for every aspect of Indian life, including modern education, various scientific discoveries, establishing

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***Mr Rajan Vedanayagam***

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morality and true spirituality and faith in God. So Christianity is not new to the land of India.

Indians are basically religious people, and they live and die for their religion. Major philosophical religious battles of the world are being fought in the land of India. When a Hindu talks about the Indian culture, he or she is talking about the Hindu religion. The Hindu religion and the Indian culture are one and the same, and they are inseparable. That was one of the reasons why the western world has been attracted to the Indian culture and the Indian way of life. With that great, curious mind the western world flooded to India in the 60's.

In 1991, the Hindu religious leaders brought their "Cultural Festival" to western countries like America, Canada and England, etc. In that exhibition, they built various, identical Hindu temples and idols of India. They were architecturally colorful and they practically demonstrated Hindu worship, as well as presenting the philosophy of the Indian way of life, to give a picture to the western world. The delicious Indian food was served in Indian style. They set the exhibition for months in different places, so people could see and feel the religious culture of India. It was very fascinating to the western world. On the other hand, today modern India is changing rapidly toward Christianized western civilization, and their way of life. Whether we like it or not, the Christian world has molded modern India. It is wiser to go forward with modern India rather than to go backward to old, ancient India.

Early western Christian Missionaries came to India, not only to see the culture and the way of life, but also to serve sacrificially to help the helpless, and to build our motherland in such a way that we can stand great along with other developing countries of the world. In those young, undeveloped days of India, the religious practice of temple prostitution was also part of the Hindu culture.

As a result, countless helpless orphan babies were secretly left without any mercy, in and around the Hindu temples.

Amy Carmichael was born in Ireland in 1867, and arrived in India in 1895. She established Dohnavur Orphanage in Dohnavur, Tamil Nadu, India. She started "Dohnavr Fellowship" in 1901 with a purpose of rescuing those precious orphan babies, who were the outcome of the "secret" Hindu practice of temple prostitution. She gave the orphan children the basic daily needs of food, clothes, shelter and above all she shared the love of Christ with them. She received Christ's love in her heart daily. She spent hours of prayer and meditation upon the word of God, the Bible to get spiritual strength from the Lord. She educated the orphan children by sending them to schools and even Christian colleges, and placed them in society with good moral standards. Some of those children were gifted and earned professional degrees and had contributed to build our scientific, modern India.

Amy Carmichael lived 55 years in India to render that selfless service, and went to her eternal home with the Lord when she was 84 years of age. I should say that this was her Christian contribution toward humanitarian and developmental, noble service to our motherland of India. She was not doing a social work, but sharing the Christian principles with Indian society, and building up true spirituality. When Amy Carmichael was very young, she was obedient to the call of Christ, the Savior of the world, to go to India. It is a fact that we had such a shameful religious practice in India, such as temple prostitution. She revolutionized our whole country against the immoral, religious practice of prostitution. Every Indian should acknowledge the lifetime service of Amy Carmichael, and that she built our moral culture upon her Christian principles. She wrote 34 books. Some of her books were written when she was bedridden with

constant physical pain, during the end of her life. Those books are enlightening to our spiritual life.

The history of the world forces us to see that Christianity is the cement, binding and building civilizations in both the East and the West. As East and West have come closer together, our modern India stands very high in every aspect, among the leading nations of the world today, due to the hard work of the Christian missionaries, and the determination of the native Christian leaders, who put a strong foundation to build our motherland for the past 2000 years. Christianity and Christian leaders still play an important part in developing modern India. They must be encouraged to continue their work, instead of fighting against Christ and Christian principles.

As I wrote in my previous article, conversion is purely the work of the Holy Spirit. God can use that converted or changed person to bring a change to our nation for good. Here I would like to present the outstanding achievements of Pandita Ramabai, who is among the great native Christian leaders of India. Ramabai was born in a wealthy Brahmin family in Karnataka, Mysore State, India in 1858. Her father was a Brahmin, and a devout orthodox Hindu as well as a scholar. Ramabai became a follower of Christ through conversion by the work of the Holy Spirit, not by any man made work. She went to England early in 1883 for her studies. She was a scholar, saint and builder of modern India. More than one hundred years ago, she went forward with the strength of Christ to educate India, bringing the country into the modern era, based on Christ's principles.

Pandita Ramabai started her well-known home, called "Ramabai Mukti Mission" in Kedgan, India to help

unfortunate, ill-treated children, widows and destitute orphans. Another of her greatest achievements was her contribution to the emancipation of women, which contributed to social reform in India. In that ancient era, India gave no value to women, and they had no voice in society. On September 5, 1882 her lecture before the Hunter Commission moved even the Empress Queen Victoria, and inspired the establishment of women's hospitals and the training of the first woman doctors in India. Today we see women in every profession in modern India because of her. Even our previous Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi stood tall among the international leaders of the world due to the foundation laid by Ramabai over one hundred years ago. She used Biblical Christian principles to bring liberty and equality to the women of India. It is obvious to see as we look back through history, how growth and development in any civilization is dependent upon Christian principles.

Ramabai was instrumental in the pioneering of Kindergarten and primary school education, and the training of teachers. She helped her blind students to read by introducing Braille in the Mukti Mission. That led to the development of schools for the blind in India. Ramabai was one of the first women to speak up in defense of women's emancipation, before the Indian Congress. In 1882 she wrote a book entitled, "Stri Dharma Niti" on morals and ethics for women. It is still used as a reference book in colleges today. Another area where she was involved was in the area of health care for the villages and tribes. The doctors and nurses from Mukti, even today go out to the surrounding villages to provide free health care as a humanitarian service for the poor. Mukti Mission is still following the vision of Ramabai.



Throughout her adult life, Pandita Ramabai was a champion for a variety of humanitarian services to modernize India. Being a devout, native Christian herself, all of her work was founded on the Biblical teachings of Christ and His principles. God bless India for eternal good.

## **Chapter - XIX**

### **CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION TO SCIENCE**

Science covers the broad field of knowledge that deals with observed facts and the relationships among those facts. Science has enormous influence on our lives. It provides the basis of much of modern technology that makes our lives and work easy. Today India is one of the leading nations in the area of science and technology. Some studies accord the 11<sup>th</sup> place among the most industrialized nations with the third largest number of scientists and engineers. India's place in other fields like space technology, nuclear power, information technology, computers, etc., is well known. Christians have contributed significantly in establishing and strengthening scientific traditions through their educational institutions. Their contributions to the educational, social and healthcare fields are significant and well recognized. There have been many Christian scientists who dedicated themselves to teaching and research and inspired and initiated so many of their

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students to become outstanding scientists nationally and internationally.

Here we would like to briefly enumerate the names of some Christians who have contributed to science in India especially in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. It must be noted that a study of this type will remain very incomplete, mainly because, no systematic and detailed survey has been carried out so far and because it is an ongoing process. For convenience sake we will group the contributions under two sections, namely the Life Sciences including Medicine and Physical Sciences.

## **2. Life Sciences including Medicine**

Quite a few outstanding names are there who have contributed to science through research, teaching and publications in the field of life sciences and medicine.

### **Prof. Cecil Saldahna (b1930)**

He was a well-recognized plant taxonomist from Karnataka and served the government of India on several official bodies and on many missions. He was a Jesuit priest. His contributions to preserve the environment were widely recognized. Several plants have been named after him. He has also written some books on plant taxonomy and has published many research papers.

### **Prof. K.M. Mathew (b1930)**

He was the founder-Director of Rapinat Herbarium at St. Joseph's College, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu. He was a Jesuit priest. He was a highly-regarded plant taxonomist and environmentalist. His contributions to environmental concerns were nationally and internationally recognized. Many plants have been named after him. He has also written many books on plant taxonomy. The Government of India awarded him the Indira Gandhi Paryavaran Puraskar Award for 2002 for his services to the cause of Environment. He has also published many research articles.

**Prof. Leo D'Souza (b1930)**

He has specialized in tissue culture. He is a Jesuit priest from Karnataka. He was able to raise plants like breadfruit and cashew through tissue culture and helped the farmers to raise these crops. He has published many research articles and edited some books.

**Prof. V.S. Manickam (b1944)**

He is a specialist in Ferns and flowering plants. He is a Jesuit priest. He has done extensive research on ferns and flowering plants and has published many books and papers. He is the founder-Director of the Centre for Biodiversity and Biotechnology at St. Xavier's College, Palayamkottai.

**Prof. K.V. Peter (b1946)**

He is a horticulturist and plant breeder. He has developed and released high-yielding and disease resistant varieties of chilli, eggplant, tomato, bhendi and bittergourd. He has authored and edited 12 books and has written 120 articles. He has received Rafi Ahmed Kidwai Award, Hari Om Award, etc. He is the former Vice-Chancellor of Kerala Agricultural University.

**Prof. P. Dayanandan (b1944)**

He has specialized in Plant sciences. He has carried out many research studies. He has published a few research articles.

**Prof. George Thomas (b1954)**

He is a specialist in biotechnology. He was the first to document recombinant DNA and DNA sequencing in India. He has published many research articles. He has served in government bodies.

**Prof. Thomas Joseph (b1935)**

He is a specialist in biology of nitrogen fixation and biotechnology. He is a fellow of the Indian National

Science Academy. He was the director of SPIC Science Foundation, Biotechnology Division. He has published many research articles.

**Prof. Gnanamanickam (b1945)**

He has specialized in plant-microbe interactions. He has published many research papers.

**Prof. D.J. Bagyaraj (b1940)**

He is a specialist in Microbiology. He is a fellow of the Indian National Science Academy. He has written many research articles.

**Prof. C.J. Dominic (b1930)**

He is a specialist in reproduction physiology and endocrinology in the field of zoology. He is a fellow of the Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi. He has published many research articles.

**Prof. T.J. John (b1935)**

He is a MBBS doctor specialized in pediatrics, microbiology and virology. He is a fellow of the Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi. He has written many research articles.

**Prof. S. John Britto (b1946)**

He is a specialist in plant taxonomy. He is a Jesuit priest. He is the director of Rapinat herbarium, St. Joseph's College, Tiruchirapalli. He has written a few books and some research articles. He is the recipient of Tamil Nadu Scientist award for Environment.

**Prof. J.D. Padayatty (b1928)**

He is a specialist in molecular biology. He is a fellow of the Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi and Indian Academy of Science, Bangalore. He has written nearly 100 research articles.



**Pro. A.G. Sathyanesan (b1926)**

He is a specialist in Neuroendocrinology, comparative Endocrinology and Fisheries. He is a fellow of the Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi. He is a recipient of Rafi Ahmed Kidwai Award. He has published nearly 200 research papers.

**Dr. Susan Eapern (b1949)**

She is a specialist in plant tissue culture and genetic engineering. She has published many research papers.

**Prof. S. Ignacimuthu (b1948)**

He is a specialist in plant biotechnology and biopesticides. He is a Jesuit priest. He is the director of world renowned Entomology Research Institute, Loyola College, Chennai. He has published more than 30 books and 200 research articles. He has been the vice chancellor of Bharathiar University, Coimbatore and University of Madras, Chennai. He was a member of Board of Biotechnology, Government of Tamil Nadu. He is the recipient of Tamil Nadu Scientist Award for Life Sciences. He has served in many government bodies.

**Prof. T.C. Santiago (b1949)**

He is a specialist in the field of microbial genetics and molecular genetics. He has published many research papers.

**Prof. Duston P. Ambrose (b1954)**

He is a specialist in insects especially the Reduviids. He has written many books and published many research papers.

**Prof. B. Vasantharaj David (b1938)**

He is a specialist in insects. He has published many research articles and a few books. He has been a consultant for many companies.

**Prof. S. Jayaraj (b1944)**

He is a specialist in Agricultural Entomology. He has published many research papers and a few books. He was the vice chancellor of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore. He has served in many government bodies and committees.

**Dr C.M. Cherian (b1942)**

He is an MBBS doctor specialized in cardiology. He is a renowned heart surgeon. He has published many research papers.

**3. Physical Sciences**

There have also been a few notable Christians who have contributed to physical sciences through their teaching and research

**Dr P. Abraham (b1920)**

He is a specialist in Metallurgy. He is a fellow of the Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi. He has been technical advisor to Aluminum Association of India. He has published many research papers.

**Prof. R.R. Daniel (b1975)**

He is a specialist in space physics. He is a fellow of the Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi. He was formerly scientific secretary, COSTED-IBN, Chennai. He has authored many research articles.

**Prof. M.V. George (b1928)**

He is a specialist in organic Reactions and Photochemistry. He is a fellow of the Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi. He has published many research papers.

**Prof. K.T. Jacob (b1944)**

He is a specialist in Materials Extraction, Thermodynamics, Materials Science and Solid State

Sensors. He is a fellow of the Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi. He has published many research articles.

**Prof. P.W. Mathews (b1932)**

He is a specialist in Theoretical Physics and Geodynamics. He is a fellow of the Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi. He has published many research papers.

**Prof. P. Rathnasamy (b1942)**

He is a specialist in catalysts in the field of chemistry. He is a fellow of the Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi. He has published many research papers. He was the Director of National Chemical Laboratory, Pune.

**Prof. T.M. Jacob (b1927)**

He is a specialist in organic chemistry, molecular biology and immunology of nucleic acids. He was successful in the production of antibodies that recognize double stranded DNA. He is a fellow of the Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi and fellow of Indian Academy of Sciences, Bangalore. He has published many research papers.

**Prof. Lourdu M Yeddanapalli (b1904)**

He was a specialist in chemical kinetics and high polymer. He was a Jesuit priest. He has published many research papers in National and International journals. He was a fellow of many science academies.

**Conclusion**

From the above narration, it is evident that there have been many Christians who have contributed to the growth of science in India through their teaching, research and publications. Many of them were respected in their field of specialization and were influential in

motivating many students to take up to science. Some of them have been working in many government bodies and helped in shaping some policy decisions. Some of the books written by them have been used as text books in colleges and universities. Christians can certainly hold their heads high and take legitimate pride in their substantial contribution to science.

## Chapter - XX

### CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION TO WITH SPECIAL TO REFERENCE TO THE CHURCH OF SOUTH INDIA

In the making of this nation called India, the Christian faith and the Indian Church have contributed most positively and significantly. Impartial political and social scientists and thinkers held the view that India as a nation is still in the making only. In this ongoing process of making or building the nation, the Indian church had played a decisive and an enviable role not with standing the fact that they could have done far better.

A 'nation' "is a body of people occupying a given area whose common interests are strong enough to make possible the maintenance of a single sovereign civil authority, i.e., a State which may often does predate the nation as a historical reality."<sup>1</sup> Nation, therefore, in this present study refers to our country 'India' and her people-the Sovereign Republic of India.

By the term "Church," the present study refers to the Church of South India (CSI). It was the world's first

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united church to include Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Congregationalists traditions.<sup>2</sup> On 27 September 1947, in the Cathedral Church of St George, in Madras, the CSI was solemnly inaugurated.<sup>3</sup> The CSI began with 14 dioceses and a membership of 10, 17,184 of whom 2, 63,680 were communicants.<sup>4</sup> Today the CSI consists of 21 dioceses covering the entire South India and also Sri Lanka with 3.8 million members and 14,000 congregations.<sup>5</sup> The CSI runs 38 colleges, 1,930 schools and 104 hospitals.

In the 1960s, the Church became conscious of its social responsibilities and started organizing rural development projects. There are, at present, 50 such projects all over South India, 50 training centres for young people, and 512 residential hostels for a total of 35,000 children.<sup>6</sup> The intention of this paper is to present a bird's eyevue of the contributions made by the CSI in the realm of education, medical and social services, and provide suggestions as to how the church could increase its level of contribution by reforming and restructuring its programmes.

"Nation building" is defined as "the process of reinforcing the common bonds among the people of a nation state to the end that there may be general stability and prosperity so that the nation may participate usefully in the community of nations".<sup>7</sup> It is an ongoing task of developing a nation in relation to its own people and also in relation to other nations in the world. In the words of Valerian Cardinal Gracias, "National development does not consist merely in economic progress but by means of increasing possibility for all living, a fully human life on the physical (material), cultural and spiritual levels. It also implies the growing ability of a nation as a whole to take its rightful place in the international field, economically, politically and culturally, i.e., to function with a proper degree of autonomy and prestige".<sup>8</sup>

The foundational materials used in building a nation are not bricks and mortars, i.e., not a strong treasury, nor a strong army nor an in exhaustible and formidable arsenal, though they may seem important. To be a nation, any community or society may require political unity and territorial integrity. Christian Church that involves in building a nation has to be deeply concerned about these constituents, but more so about the most foundational aspects which are values and ideas. Having seen the general parameters of the understanding of Church and Nation building, the key principles involved in the role of CSI in nation building, are creating a sense of unity, rendering educational, medical and social services.

### **Towards Forging Unity**

First and foremost, it must be admitted that the union, itself is a unique achievement. The union was the first instance in the history of Christendom that non-Episcopal churches and an Episcopal Church (Anglican) came together to form an entirely new Episcopal church. About a million of Christians, who hitherto had been distinguished as Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists, agreed to abandon all their differences and, henceforth, accepted to be simple members of the CSI. It was not only the union of different denominations but of different languages (Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, and Malayalam), of geographical areas (Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala) and of heterogeneous cultural and social-economic backgrounds.

The CSI believed not only in the union of churches in South India but in the church universal-denoting the unity of the nation as well as global unity. Its motto **THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE**<sup>9</sup> denoted that the church should be an effective instrument in bringing out unity, greater peace, closer fellowship and fuller life of the church both within and without. In a nutshell, the aim

of the CSI was to grow together in unity. The church had also given the impetus to churches in other places to attempt such union. The result was the birth of the CHURCH OF NORTH INDIA (CNI) on November 29, 1970.<sup>10</sup> The CSI had also made progress towards union negotiations with other churches in the region-the Lutheran, the Marthoma and the CNI.<sup>11</sup>

The Church's global endeavour could be gleaned from its active participation and relationship with the world ecumenical bodies such as the World Council of Churches (WCC), the Anglican Consultative Council, the Council for World Mission, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the World Methodist Council.<sup>12</sup> Thus the CSI was committed to its vision of forming one Protestant Church for the whole of India and striving for the Church Universal. This experience of the CSI has proved that the divisive nature of the church could give way to unity. No wonder, the churches that were interested in unity look to the CSI for their experience.

### **Educational Enterprises**

Though it is considered that the British laid the foundations of the modern educational system in India, in the historical perspective the real foundation of the modern Indian education was laid not by the British administrative authorities but by the Christian missionaries.<sup>13</sup> The Act of 1813 gave further impetus to the missionaries to set up schools and lay the foundation of the modern educational system.<sup>14</sup> The schools of CSI owe their origin to the early Protestant missionaries and mission boards. The CSI spread its wings over not only providing education to the normal children but to the special children like the blind, deaf, mute, mentally retarded, and orthopaedically challenged.

In 1962, the Synod (the supreme governing body of the CSI) decided to constitute a Synod Board of Education

and from 1983 onwards the Board's name was changed as the CSI Council for Education.<sup>15</sup> The major aim of the Board was to strengthen the education ministry of the CSI, accomplished through a net work of institutions; adopting formal and non-formal delivery system at the pre-primary, primary, secondary and collegiate stages, catering mainly to the poorest of the poor from the villages.<sup>16</sup> Its main duty was to coordinate the educational work of the different dioceses in the CSI fold.<sup>17</sup> The CSI Council for Education has succeeded in developing broad popular support for educational efforts which increase national and global awareness within our educational system. It had done this by: (i) enlisting the support by all sources, (ii) providing the schools and all group of educational institutions with appropriate strategies, material, etc. (iii) promoting networks to facilitate the exchange of information among educators, (iv) organizing programmes for schools and colleges, and (v) encouraging research activities that improve the ability of the schools to teach young people about the world in which they live.<sup>18</sup>

The usual criticism against the Christian educational institutions was that they cater to the needs of the elite upper classes in the cities and towns, and in the process the majority of the poor people in the villages were kept outside the gates of the learning centres. Bearing this criticism in mind, the CSI launched a new programme designated as Comprehensive Rural Primary School Education Development (CORPED) in 1991 being operated in 252 villages in its 20 dioceses.<sup>19</sup> The CSI had also forged ahead as a trendsetter to pioneer the Computer Education and training programme at school level. The CSI Madras Diocese, under the dynamism of Bishop of Sundar Clarke (1974-1989), started a multi terminal and professional computer system at school level for the first time in India in 1985.<sup>20</sup> Thus the CSI



stretched forth its educational services with the help and support of the government, foreign mission boards, voluntary organizations, and private donors.

### **Medical Mission**

Medical mission was given greater importance in all the missionary programmes. The World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910 unanimously recognized the medical mission as an integral and essential part of the missionary work.<sup>21</sup> When the transition from 'Missions' to the 'Church' took place, importance of the healing ministry had not been lost sight by the church. At present the CSI has 104 hospitals<sup>22</sup> and an impressive network of health centres within the 21 dioceses. A good majority of them (approx.80%) are small hospitals with 15-50 beds placed in remote rural area. In 1962 the Central Medical Board was constituted to integrate the medical work of the CSI hospitals and advise the dioceses on plans and problems connected with their medical work and to help in the placement of sponsored Velore graduates from dioceses.<sup>23</sup>

In India, during the post-Independence era, major efforts were made to render basic health services to its people, particularly those spread over the 6,00,000 villages. The entire rural India was divided into Community Development Blocks accommodating, approximately, 100 villages per Block for integrated health problem of the masses. It is against this background that the CSI presents its Ministry of Healing. It should be remembered that the hospitals of CSI, represent pioneering efforts on the part of dedicated medical missionaries partly from abroad to provide the much needed medical relief, when health efforts by governmental agencies in the various states were barely rudimentary. Suffice it to say the institutions of the CSI



had a decisive and historic role to play as forerunners of the present-day health establishments in the different states, particularly in terms of quality, content, and coverage of healthcare.

During the later part of the 1980s, when the CSI reviewed its missions, it came out with a new vision embodied in **VELCOM** (Vision for Equipping Local Congregations in Mission). From being passive recipients of service, the local congregations were called upon to play a more sublime and elevated role as partners in the healing ministry of the church.<sup>24</sup> This actually meant transformation of the local congregation into a healing community.<sup>25</sup> Though medical men were there to make medical aid accessible to the local community, auxiliary services sometimes on voluntary basis were utilized to promote preventive and community health.<sup>26</sup> The programme is aimed to train and prepare as large a number of 'health guides' as possible to cover the needy rural areas. The aim was to see that there would at least be one trained health guide in every village who would serve as an effective link between the rural family and the local health establishment thus making the villages self-reliant in health as far as possible.<sup>27</sup>

Such being its merit, other churches such as Lutherans and Presbyterians in Bangladesh and the Church of North India had also introduced the programme. Even churches of other countries like Germany, USA, Britain, Ireland, Dublin and the African Churches in Namibia and Zambia were greatly inspired by this idea of exploring local resources.<sup>28</sup> It should be remembered here that the Tamilnadu government also introduced this idea in the "Namakku Naamay programme." This programme of the CSI was implanted not only in its healing ministry but in its other services.

Another great challenge that the CSI addressed was the deadly disease of AIDs, which according to evidence

available today, had made a foothold in India since 1967. The Government of India estimates that more than two million people are HIV carriers. The CSI organized several workshops/seminars at the Synod/Regional levels mainly with the idea of creating awareness about the nature of the problem among the church leadership and the professional groups. It is gratifying that the CSI is ably assisted in this process by the Christian Medical College, Vellore, Department Virology which is now recognized the world over for its pioneering role in the field of HIV/AIDS. The CSI is also actively collaborating with other churches and Christian voluntary agencies in this task.<sup>29</sup>

Thus the CSI evolved new ventures to satisfy the changing health needs of the people in its locality. However, with regard to its commitment and service-mindedness, the hospitals have fallen short of requirements. There were times when they have failed in the acid tests like maintaining accounts and book-keeping and the heads of the institutions forgot altogether their responsibility to answer the questions that were raised from the grassroot level. When the CSI takes pride in championing the cause of medical services and medical education, it is high time it learns the lessons of selfless service and the importance of career commitment from its Catholic counterpart.

### **Strategy for Social Action**

The social activities of the church in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, though increased in number, were mainly confined to philanthropic activities such as establishing and maintaining schools, orphanages, hospitals, leprosy asylums, and homes for the poor and the aged. Hence moral improvements, education, increase of self-respect, elevation of the status of women, and escape from social thralldom were recognized as legitimate aims and natural results of the church's

endeavour. The building up of a Christian church with a strong social and educational base became their chief concern by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and all social activities were primarily directed to this end.

Over these years, the CSI had been transforming its social role from social service to social action. The former concept is based on charity and donations, which benefited the recipient only on a temporary basis, and he maintained a passive posture. Contrary to this, the CSI had initiated social action, making the recipient as a partner in a development project so that he could sustain himself from the benefits incurred from time to time. He was no more a passive recipient but an active earner. The motive of the church behind the social action was to bring about a social change. That profound awareness for the need of social change and uplift, as a reaction and effect of Christian thought and life in some sections of society could be found in Madras as early as in 1852.<sup>30</sup>

The CSI chalked out various programmes to uplift the poor, the marginalized, and the women and in the process to a certain extent contributed to the social change in social behaviour, social structure, and ethical and cultural values. In fact, compared to the evangelistic work of the church, the carrying out of the social action of the church had meant large investments in funds, buildings, and personnel.<sup>31</sup> The social action of the CSI and its dioceses were not highly specialized and compartmentalized but comprehensive and simple. In other words, the social action of the CSI was not merely aimed at the physical aspects such as orphanage buildings or hostels for the poor but to build a people who would be self-confident, organized, caring and united, working together to achieve a common goal of development.

The social action of the CSI included, its services to women, urban poor, aged, destitute, addicts and Dalits.

The inauguration of the CSI Women's Fellowship (CSIWF) on 17 September, 1951 signalled the role of women in the activities of the church.<sup>32</sup> At present, there are more than 70-80 projects run by the CSI Women's Fellowship like Tribal Welfare Programmes, widows' cottage, home for the aged, disabled children's homes, community development centres, self-employment training programmes, adult literacy programmes, tailoring centres, handicraft centres, school of music, bakery and confectionary, counselling centres, rehabilitation centres for women, co-operative stores, etc.. In 1988, the CSI Women's Fellowship took a new step to spread literacy in the remote villages and slums. By 1997, there were 307 pre-schools run by the CSI Women's Fellowship. Since 1989, an average of 64,470 children got basic education in South India.

In 1988, the World Council of Churches launched the Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988-98) as a follow up work of the U.N. Decade for Women (1975-1985).<sup>33</sup> In keeping with the trend the CSI took the responsibility for deeper involvement in the life struggles of women like dowry, legal status, abuse of medical technology, exploitation of women's sexuality etc..<sup>34</sup>

95 % of the members of CSIWF were laywomen. The question of ordained women participation was only a dream before 1976. Only in 1976 did the Synod pass a resolution to ordain women and accordingly the CSI Constitution was amended in 1980. In 1988, there were 11 ordained women and the number rose to 55 in 1997.<sup>35</sup> Days are not far off when a woman can even become a Bishop in the CSI dioceses. Though the church had taken much care in addressing the women's issues like health, literacy, employment and empowerment, it was felt by the President of the Madras Diocesan Women's Concerns



Board that still the church was lagging behind in its services to women compared to the work of the Catholics.

To conclude, it could be said that by reorientation of its services and strategies, by restoration of constitutional episcopacy, by democratisation of the decision-making bodies and processes at all levels, by electoral reforms in ensuring fair elections to the administrative bodies, the CSI can more progressively recapture the vision of the founders. The CSI, after having recaptured the vision of the founding fathers in achieving spiritual renewal, can go forward with its pilgrimage with a sense of dedication and firm commitment to make its role more relevant and effective in nation building.

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- <sup>18</sup> South India Churchman, October 1996, (Madras, 1996), p. 5
- <sup>19</sup> Draft Reports of the Synod- 1992, CSI, (Madras, 1992), p. 82

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- <sup>21</sup> World Missionary Conference-1910: The History and Records together with Addresses delivered at the Evening Meetings, (New York, 1910), p.113
- <sup>22</sup> <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/acns/acnsarchive/acns/300/acns1316.html>
- <sup>23</sup> Tenth CSI Synod Proceedings, (Madras, 1966), p. 215
- <sup>24</sup> Draft Reports of the Synod-1994, CSI, (Madras, 1994), p. 98
- <sup>25</sup> George Joseph, Healing Ministry of the Local Congregation, in Christ V. Theodore (ed), *Witnessing Churches*, (Madras, 1994), p. 28
- <sup>26</sup> A.C. Ommen, *The Christian Church and Medical Work in India*, in Mathai Zachariah (ed), The Indian Church and fulfillment, (Lucknow, 1971), p.197
- <sup>27</sup> The South India Churchman, CSI (Madras, June 1990), p. 16
- <sup>28</sup> D. Vijayakumar, *CSI and Development*, in *United to Unite*, n.5, pp. 74-75
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- <sup>30</sup> R. Sundaralingam, *politics and Nationalist Awakening n South India-1852-1891*, (Delhi, 1980), pp.56-58
- <sup>31</sup> Report of the Special Committee appointed by the CSI Synod to Study the Life and Work of the Church: *The Church of South India After Thirty Years*, (Madras, 1978), p.28
- <sup>32</sup> Ivaleen Ammanna, Women's Fellowship in J.W. Gladstone, (ed), n. 5, pp. 114-115
- <sup>33</sup> Aruna Gnanadason, The Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women and the Jubilee theme, in *National Council of Churches Review*, Vol C XVIII, No. 10, National Council of Churches in India, (Nagpur, November, 1998), p. 810
- <sup>34</sup> K.M. George, Church of South India: Life in Union (1947-97), (Delhi, 1999), pp. 220-221
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## Chapter - XXI

### CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION TO WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE MIZO CONTEXT

It is a great privilege to have been invited to contribute a paper in the book to be published by the ELTC. I would like to thank the Bishop, Rt Rev. Dr Ezra Sargunam, and my friend, Rev. Dr Samuel Jayakumar, for inviting me to contribute this paper.

To begin with, it may be good to mention that our concern in this paper is to discuss the contribution of the Western Christianity in bringing about change and improvement in the socio-cultural, political, economic, and religious context of the Mizos. To prepare the ground for discussion, first of all, we shall first have a brief look at the historical context of the Mizos<sup>1</sup> during the pre-Christian days.

There is no dispute about the claim that the Mizos are of Mongoloid stock. However, in the absence of written records, it is almost impossible to trace their relationship with the other peoples of Mongolian stock.

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However, it is agreed that the ancestors of the Mizos once lived in the Chin Hills of Myanmar, which lie in the neighbouring area to the east of Mizoram for nearly 400 years before settling in Mizoram.<sup>2</sup>

The Mizos comprise various tribes including Lusei, Hmar, Pawi, Paihte, Ralte, Lakher, etc.. They speak different dialects but have had but one common language after the coming of Christianity in the land. According to the 1901 census, the total population of the Mizos living in Mizoram was 82,434.<sup>3</sup> The Mizos live in villages which is the basic unit of their society. They are a close-knit society with no caste system or class distinction. Mrs E. Chapman was right when she said that there is a strong sense of unity among the Mizos.<sup>4</sup> There has been, in Mizo social life, from antiquity an ideal of life and service commonly known as *tlawmngaihna*,<sup>5</sup> which is considered to be the unifying force working within the Mizo society.

However, the Mizo life in the Pre-Christian days was not at all free from vices. In the past, the Mizos were known as head-hunters. Because of this practice of head-hunting, they were often described as the savages of the hills.<sup>6</sup> In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they were described in the press as a tribe of irreclaimable savages.<sup>7</sup> The practice of head-hunting game continued till the British occupation.

The Mizo Society is patriarchal. Women were oppressed under the traditional social and cultural system. E. Chapman might be right again when she said that the worst feature of the Mizo social life was their treatment of women.<sup>8</sup> One may be shocked to hear that Mizo women in the past had no rights at all and menfolk could treat them in any way they liked.<sup>9</sup> They bought women just as they bought animals and regarded them as their property.<sup>10</sup> Women worked quite hard day and night, but possessed nothing.



In the pre-Christian Mizo society, polygamy was allowed and divorce was quite common. Slavery which was called bawi or sal was practised.<sup>11</sup> Many of the slaves were captives of raids made in neighbouring countries. Drinking, which was considered as a chief source of all vices, was socialized in pre-Christian Mizo Society.<sup>12</sup> Sickness was quite common among the pre-Christian Mizos. Insanity was extraordinarily prevalent.<sup>13</sup> In his report for 1904, J.H. Lorrain, the BMS Missionary said:

Almost before we have had five minutes' rest, the sick and suffering begin to gather around the door and the medicine basket is brought out and hands are full of work until it is time to begin preaching . . . there always seems to be a terrible lot of sickness about and the suffering one is brought into contact which is enough to melt to pity a heart of stone.<sup>14</sup>

The Mizos lived in villages, each of which was ruled by a chief who was entirely independent. He settled all disputes in his village.<sup>15</sup> The British administration did not want to disturb the traditional political system dominated by the village chiefs. The village chiefs were allowed to continue their rule with some limited powers. Until 1954, the chiefs were the centres of power in all the villages in Mizoram.<sup>16</sup> It is important to note that the British administration brought about many changes not only in the socio-cultural life but in the political realm. Almost all the regions in Mizoram were put under one rule. This is a legacy the Mizos had inherited from the British rule. With the coming of the British, the Mizos were exposed to the Western culture which soon brought about sweeping changes in their socio-cultural life. The British administration also opened up the way for the missionaries to introduce Christianity to Mizoram.

From antiquity, the economy of the Mizos was based on jhuming cultivation, which was a primitive method

of agriculture. Each village had a limited area for cultivation and every year they would choose a fresh hillside for the jhuming cultivation. When the area available for cultivation was exhausted, the whole village had to move to another site. This primitive economic system forced the pre-Christian Mizos to adopt a semi-nomadic life.<sup>17</sup> However, in the olden days, the Mizos were economically self-sufficient. The main crops grown were rice, maize, millet, potatoes, cucumber, etc.. They hunted and trapped animals for food. They manufactured earthen pots, pipes, hoes, daos, hats, baskets, clothes, etc..

The Mizo religion, during pre-Christian era, has often been described as animism which was considered as the earliest form of religion based on the idea of plurality of spirits. According to E. Taylor, animism is the belief in spiritual beings which are held to affect or control the events of the material world and human life here and after.<sup>18</sup> For the Mizos, animism was popularly known as *ramhuai bia* which meant worshipping demons or evil. In pre-Christian days, the Mizos thought that the earth, water, streams, rivers, forests, mountains, and any other objects curiously shaped or deformed were inhabited by evil spirits known as *ramhuai*. They, therefore, lived in constant fear of these evil spirits.<sup>19</sup> J.H. Lorrain said: "The religion of these hardy mountaineers was one of fear for it (evil spirit) was based upon the belief that the great forests which covered their country were everywhere haunted by innumerable evil spirits always seeking to do them harm."<sup>20</sup>

The same writer continued to mention that the Mizos in pre-Christian days spent all their religious energies in seeking to appease these evil spirits by offering up to them almost all their domestic animals as sacrifices. As J.M. Lloyd has rightly pointed out,<sup>21</sup> for the Mizos the evil spirits were cruel, malicious, and capricious. They were easily offended if a human being trespassed on their

domain. A human being would soon realize if he or she had offended the evil spirits and would need to make formal amends. Otherwise, they would cause illness and even death. The Mizos, in pre-Christian days, were thus without peace and they remained busy almost all the time in attempting to appease the evil spirits.

It is quite interesting to note that the context of the Mizos during the pre-Christian days mentioned above was radically changed after the coming of Christianity. With the adoption of the new faith, the socio-cultural, political and economic life was also radically changed. This radical change in the socio-cultural, political and economic life has brought about a considerable improvement in the life of the Mizos who had been known as head-hunters or savages in the past.

One may be surprised to learn that almost all the Mizos living in different parts of Mizoram could become Christian within a short span of a mere 50 years.<sup>22</sup> With the coming of the Arthington Missionaries in 1894 and of the Welsh Missionaries in 1897, Christianity began to take root in the soil of Mizoram.<sup>23</sup> It soon grew covering the whole country and in 1944 when the golden jubilee of the advent of Christianity was celebrated, almost all the Mizos became Christian.<sup>24</sup> The old beliefs and practices of their old religion known as animism were nowhere to be seen. It may be true to say that in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, practically no one was seen to have made an attempt to appease the evil spirits known as *ramhuai* by offering sacrifices.<sup>25</sup> Rather, every man and woman have claimed to have been indwelt and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Christianity thus offered the Mizos a new faith and religion which has delivered them from the bondage of evil spirits or harmful beliefs and practices. If anyone takes the context of Mizoram seriously, this should be seen as an important contribution of Christianity towards nation building.

Christianity has brought peace to the land not only by simply introducing a new faith or religion, but by helping the Mizos to live a good Christian life. Before the British rule, Mizoram was often considered as no man's land. The Mizos, therefore, lived in the land without the control of other states or nations. When they came under the British rule by the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century by force, they were not reconciled to the new ruler. As Rev. J.M. Lloyd has pointed out rightly,<sup>26</sup> the Mizo chiefs and their peoples were slowly reconciled to British as they then encountered with the Christian faith which teaches the solidarity of all people created by God and saved by Christ through His life and death on the cross. How great is the Christian contribution towards the nation building! It should also be noted here that when insurgency took place and disturbed the peace in the land in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was the Church and its leaders who were instrumental in bringing peace in the land. One may be surprised to learn that Christianity in Mizoram has never encouraged separation from the Indian Union, but strengthened the national integration.<sup>27</sup>

Education everywhere is an asset to the nation. It is the means by which a human being can attain the goal or objective of his or her existence. It is an effective means of getting rid of all ignorances which have made human being a slave. As mentioned earlier, it is the Missionaries who started school in the land. On seeing the good work of the Missionaries in Mizoram, the Mission and the Churches were fully entrusted by the Government to take care of all the schools in the land.<sup>28</sup> Till India's Independence in 1947, almost all the schools and the education imparted through schools were in the hands of the Mission and the churches. Till today, most of the prominent citizens including the Chief Ministers, politicians, and the public leaders are the products of the Schools and Colleges run by the Mission and the



Churches. Many of the Mizo officers, who are found to have held some responsible posts in various States of India, are also the products of the schools and colleges run by the Mission and Churches. Today Mizoram has won the second place in percentage of literacy (89%) in the whole of India<sup>29</sup>. This must be seen as the Christian Contribution towards the nation building.

Before the advent of Christianity, Mizoram was divided into two and the Mizos living within the land were divided into various ethnic groups speaking different dialects.<sup>30</sup> As mentioned earlier, each village was ruled by each village chief and no idea of confederation or political unity had not yet existed. With the coming of Christianity, the language of a dominant tribe known as Lusei was made medium of teaching in the schools and the books of the Bible were translated in that Language.<sup>31</sup> As Christianity grew rapidly in the land, every body wanted to reach the Bible. They also loved to sing the song written and composed in the same Language. That made Lusei language as common language. It was accepted by all the tribes. As the different tribes in Mizoram accepted one common language which is now known as Mizo language, a political unity comprising all the different tribes in the land had emerged and developed. As a result, all the different tribes in Mizoram formed one people known as the Mizo and one country or state known as Mizoram. In the process of formation and development of this one political unit in this land, the contribution of the Missions and the Churches deserves recognition and appreciation<sup>32</sup>.

The contribution of Christianity towards the improvement in the economy of Mizoram cannot be neglected. During the pre-Christian days, the Mizos adopted primitive or barter economy<sup>33</sup>. Jhuming cultivation was the main occupation of all the Mizo



families. With the introduction of modern education through the schools and colleges, the economy of Mizoram was slowly developed. Many of the educated men and women were engaged in white collar jobs. Some of them were engaged in trade and commerce which were introduced in towns and big villages. The economic infra-structures such as better communication, power, etc. have been slowly built to improve the economy of the land during the last three decades. In all this economic development and improvement, the Mission and the Churches have played an active role. Hence, the contribution of Christianity to the Nation building deserves commendation.

Missionaries contributed a lot in liberating the slaves in Mizoram. As mentioned earlier, in pre-Christian era slavery was practiced in Mizoram in a mild form. Most of the slaves seemed to be those captured in raids and also the poor and the orphans in society. When the Missionaries came to Mizoram, some of them notably Dr. Frazer took initiative to liberate the slaves and he was, therefore, admired by the Mizos for his courage to take side with the marginalized in the society. Missionaries and the Churches also contributed a lot in the upliftment of women in our society. Though women are not yet welcomed to the ordained ministry till today, several steps have been taken to improve their pathetic condition in our society. It is expected that a day may not be too far when women can participate in the ordained ministry as men do.

To conclude, Christianity has served the nation in every field. If we take seriously the context of the Mizos, had there been no Mission and the Churches, the history of the peoples living in Mizoram would have been different. In this context, it may not be an exaggeration to say that had not Christianity been introduced in this part of the land, the Mizos would have been a lost tribe

not known to anybody today and the political unit known as Mizoram would never appear in the Map of India. Hence, in view of the context of the Mizos who live in the land sandwiched between Myanmar and Bangladesh, let me say in confidence that God in Christ has saved the people and built the nation.

### End Notes:

- <sup>1</sup> The term 'Mizo' is a generic term given to the tribal people known as Lushai during the British rule. Before the British rule, the Mizos were known as the Kukis or Cucis. Since 1954, the term Mizo has been officially used to mean all the tribes including Lusei, Hmar, Ralte, Pawi, Paihte, Lakhers, etc., living in Mizoram.
- <sup>2</sup> The term 'Mizoram' is also a new name given to the land formerly known as Lushai Hills or Lushai District. In 1954, when the District Council was formed, through the Legislative Act, the Lushai Hills was changed into Mizo District. When the Mizo District was granted Union Territory, the Mizo District was officially known as Mizoram.
- <sup>3</sup> According to the report of 1901 census, the break-up of the dominant tribes living in Mizoram was as follows: Lusei 36,382; Pawi 15,039; Ralte 13,827; Hmar 10,411; Paihte 2,810.
- <sup>4</sup> E. Chapman and M. Clark. The Mizo Miracle. (Madras: CLS, 1968) p. 10.
- <sup>5</sup> Tlawmangaihna may be understood in terms of being self-sacrificing, self-denying, brave, and firm to endure patiently.
- <sup>6</sup> J. Shakespeare. "A Note on Lushai Hills" in Census of India - 1901 B.C. Allen, ed. (Shillong: The Assam Secretariat Printing Office, 1902), p. 145.
- <sup>7</sup> J.H. Lorrain. "Annual Gatherings of Lushai Converts", The Missionary Herald. 86 (1904), p. 165.
- <sup>8</sup> E. Chapman and M. Alark. The Mizo Miracle. p. 13.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid. p.14.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>11</sup> J.M. Lloyd. The History of the Mizo Church. (Aizawl: SPB, 1992), p.3.

- <sup>12</sup> Challiana. Pipu Nun (Aizawl: The Triop Printing House, 1978), p.9.
- <sup>13</sup> B.C. Allen. Lushai Hills Distreict Gazetteer, Vol X, Allhabad, The Pioneer Press, 1906), p. 28.
- <sup>14</sup> J.H. Lorrain. "Annual Report for 1905" (Unpublished) in Lushai Hills Log Book, IN/113
- <sup>15</sup> Allen, Gazetter, p. 217.
- <sup>16</sup> Mc Call "Lushai Hills District Cover" (Unpublished) MSS EUR 361/21.
- <sup>17</sup> Strom, **Wind Through the Bamboos**, p. 42f. J.H. Lorrain, "Annual Report for 1906" (Unpublished) Lushai Hills Log Book IN/113.
- <sup>18</sup> Edward A. Taylor, **Primitive Culture** vol I (London: John Murray 1913) p.424.
- <sup>19</sup> Saiaithanga, **Mizo Sakhua** (Aizawl: Maranatha Printing Press, n.d.), p.5.
- <sup>20</sup> J.H. Lorrain, "The First Lushai Church" in the **Missionary Herald** 99(1917), p. 171.
- <sup>21</sup> Lloyd, The History of the Mizo Church, p. 9.
- <sup>22</sup> V.L. Zaithanga, From Head Hunting to Soul Hunting. (Aizawl: Synod Press, 1981), pp. 1ff.
- <sup>23</sup> Saiaithanga, Mizo Kohhran Chanchin. (Aizawl: MTLC., 1993), pp. 10ff.
- <sup>24</sup> J.M. Lloyd, The History of the Mizo Church. (Aizawl: SLPB, 1992), p. 12
- <sup>26</sup> J.M. Lloyd, Nine Missionary Pioneers (Caernarfon: The Mission Press, 1989), p. 46.
- D.E. Jones, **A Missionary Autobiography** (Aizawl: Lengchhawn Press, 1998. p. 8
- <sup>27</sup> Zairema, God's Miracle in Mizoram (Aizawl: Synod Press, 1978), pp. 42ff.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid., p.23.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid.,
- <sup>30</sup> D.E. Jones, A Missionary Authbiography, p. 8.
- <sup>31</sup> Saiaithanga, Mizo Kohhran Chanchin, p. 11
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 162ff.
- <sup>33</sup> Zairema, **God's Miracle in Mizoram**, p. 20.

## **Chapter - XXII**

### **CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION TO CHRISTIAN PARTICIPATION IN NATION BUILDING**

Nation building is an ongoing task. The object is to reinforce the bond that binds people together of a nation state. It is also about the stability and prosperity of a nation among nations or we may call it among community of nations. It is more so of developing a nation in relation to its own people and also in relation to other nations in the world. National development consist increasing possibility for all having a full human dignity in physical (material), economic, cultural as well as spiritual. It also implies the growing ability of a nation as whole to take its rightful place in the international field, economically, politically, culturally to function with a proper degree of autonomy and prestige. Christian participation in the life of the society and therefore in the building of the nation and that too in nation building of India is a moral duty and a national obligation. P. D. Devanandan relentlessly used to remind the Church that she may discharge her responsibility to the nation.

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All citizens in a nation dream to be free. Liberty is an indivisible whole. Perhaps it begins with our mind: the freedom to think even if one disagrees with other and society. It grows into a freedom to express one's beliefs and thoughts, including the freedom of the press, in order to bring positive change in the society as well as in the nation. It continues into economic freedom, wherein one definitely applies one's thoughts to tie together natural resources for everyone's welfare. However, both freedom of mind and economic freedom are integrally related to political freedom: the right of every individual to be protected from the oppressive structures and powers. To be a nation, any community or society requires political unity or territorial integrity. Christians involved in building a nation are deeply concerned about these constituents including foundational aspects which are: common civil values, common sense of progress, common participation in decision making, equality before the law, mutual respect for others and tolerance, and a feeling of freedom.

The Christian vision and commitment is of the building up of a just, participatory and sustainable society. Honesty, love, tolerance, reconciliation, forgiveness, and righteousness are the ideals that go a long way in building a just and progressing nation. However at the social level in India the caste plays an important factor in Indian society. Being a discriminatory system it does not see equality of humans. Finality belongs to the social order of caste; community is supreme; individuals existed for society. Many do not have the rights and privileges, particularly the Dalits. The Church has played a dynamic role for the cause of Dalits and still pursuing for the rights of Dalits. Spirituality and education were the monopoly of the privileged few; and they were all male domination. Some enjoyed almost divine status while the majority were denied access.



Female infanticide was widely common. Child marriage, enforced widowhood etc were the order of the day. Medical care and public health programmes were not available to the majority. Infant mortality rate was high, resulting in creating a multitude of young widows. High birth rate was the only answer to the high infant mortality rate. The women were and are still deprived of their dignity in the society. Mass illiteracy, poverty, backwardness, degeneration and dehumanization were the order of the day. India's traditional societal structure was composed of three institutions viz., joint family, caste system and the village community.

The Christian contribution to the nation-building of India in terms of education has been widely acknowledged and appreciated. Education was an integral part of the missionary commitment, and of church. In the length and breadth of this country Christians took the initiative and founded schools and other educational institutions and through the newly educated generations brought about radical changes in the value system. It broke the intellectual isolation of the Indian mind and brought it into contact with western science, literature and history. A new world of ideas revealed itself. As for example the education of women had far-reaching and thoroughgoing effects. It assured the worth of women and their dignity. They received a new sense of equality. The potential in them became available for building the family and the nation and their active participation in public affairs resulted in an enhanced quality of life. This naturally helped the economic aspect of life as well. Christian worldview acknowledges and appreciates the worth and beauty of the material world, human body and life in this world. Therefore there was always an urge to improve the quality of life here and now. Jesus went around ***preaching, teaching and healing*** and that became the

moving factor of the Church to take all these three ministries seriously. The very preaching of the Gospel that God loves everyone and has offered abundant life freely available for all. It was revolutionary in itself. The healing ministry of the Church in terms of medical education and service is unparalleled and unrivalled.

The Christian contribution to the nation building of India is best appreciated when we look at the initiatives of the missionaries in India in establishing the institution of press and journalism. A classic example is the modern Indian press of Serampore in West Bengal. That was the year of 1818 that saw launching of *Friend of India* in English, *Sumachar Darpan* in Bengali, and the short-lived *Dig Darshan* in Hindi. The three periodicals, under the general editorship of Joshua Marshman, a colleague of William Carey, were inspired exclusively by a presupposition that liberating power comes from the gospel. The birth of the free press was a non-official and non-commercial initiative. It is the Christian faith that was the basis of efforts of missionaries to go against caste system, mass illiteracy and oppression of women. The Christian understanding of spirituality instills a sense of stewardship and economic responsibility for economic emancipation of poor. Indian Christian contribution in the post independent era continued in serving the society in building a healthy, educated and prosperous nation. In the medical, educational and social sectors in caring for the widows, the aged, the destitute, the orphans, the lepers, the blind, the differently able marginalized still continues.

However, there are some emerging concerns that need proper attention. In course of time the institutional aspect of service has slowly deviated from service to commercialization. The Christian educational institutions are mostly English medium institutions and are doing a commendable job but what is needed to note that the

majority of our educational institutions cater to the needs of the elite upper classes in our cities and towns, and in the process the vast majority of our people in the villages and those who are poor are kept outside the gates of the centers of learning. This is a major failure in the involvement of building the nation of one billion people of whom the majority are in villages and slums. The deviation from reaching every village with community primary health centers for the care of the poor, the attention is focused on building super specialty hospitals to cater the needs of the rich. In many places these have become commercial centers and '5-Star Hospitals'. They no longer play a vital role in nation building but prestigious institutions for the rich. So they defeat the mission and ministry of the church.

The missionary devotion and commitment are the need of the hour. One not ventured sector in nation building by the Christians is the political life of the nation: parliamentary democracy, the legal and judiciary and the civil administration. Articulation of political process provides vision, ability to think, discuss, debate and helps people to be part of the right decision-making process. Active involvement of the Christian leaders was a priority in the struggle for independence.

India's emergence as a nation with functioning democratic institutions that have continued to flourish was, in many ways, considered by some an unlikely outcome. Many observers had thought it improbable that the diverse and seemingly contentious mosaic of religions, languages, regions that marked this fifth of humanity could ever be woven into a modern nation. And it was thought even less likely that democracy could take root and flourish in this part of the world. India did not have what many took to be the essential conditions for a functioning democracy. It was an agrarian country with a weak middle class and a comparatively small

bourgeoisie. Its population was overwhelmingly poor and illiterate. It was and is more deeply hierarchical societies in the world, which, according to some, had little conception of the egalitarianism and individualism thought to be necessary for a functioning democracy

The experience of democracy during last fifty-eight years has been complex and decidedly mixed. On the one hand, it has brought about an extraordinary politicization of Indian society and the creation of a vibrant civil society. This has resulted in a remarkable shift in the balance of political power. On the other hand, its record in securing social justice and providing the basic amenities for its citizens: decent incomes, health, education, leave a lot to be desired. Its democracy continues to rock by violent conflicts that are generated by explorations of collective identities in public contexts, and its institutions often seem overwhelmed by complex political, social and economic pressures.

But one of the greatest challenges that we, irrespective of all religion face in nation-building is: communalism and corruption. These forces are formidable and they demolish and destroy a nation if not challenged. They cross all boundaries and it is our common task as Indian citizen to develop leadership by people with *moral integrity* and courage. This is a challenge to all communities.

## Chapter - XXIII

# IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY ON THE BELIEF SYSTEMS AND THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF INDIA

With Special Reference to Early Indian Christianity

The contention of this paper that *Early Christianity Transformed the Belief Systems and the Cultural Heritage of India*.

As we know for generations people of India were divided and sub-divided into castes and sub-castes with the supposed "divine" sanction for such a social order<sup>1</sup>. The highest caste, it is claimed, issued forth from the head of the Brahman-god and the lowest caste, the Sudra came from the foot of that god. The rest of the out-castes ("untouchables") couldn't even find a place in the foot of the god. The privileged-lot (the highest caste) alone could have all the earthly possessions of wealth, knowledge and freedom. Moreover, they were a law



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unto themselves and claimed that they were above laws<sup>2</sup>. Whereas the Sudras, the slaves, as per law (of Manu) could not possess property and had no right to read or even learn the Vedas<sup>3</sup>. Perhaps, the oppressed who were under this Aryan Brahmanic system for ages breathed a fresh air of relief as the belief systems like Christianity and Islam that stood for social justice, equality and brotherhood were proclaimed. These new ways of life made inroads into the overall life and thought of the people of India.

We are talking about two different value systems. In one religious system the disciple goes searching for his Master and washes his feet and while in the other religious system the master goes in search of the disciple and wonder of wonders washes his disciple's feet. One belief system teaches that it is your birth that determines your religious, social or economical status, high or low, fortune or misfortune health or ill health. You are what you are because of the deeds (*karma*) of your previous birth. One is locked into the system and social order and there is no way out. But then Jesus Christ comes along with the message of hope, forgiveness, justice, equality, freedom and prosperity here and now, and hereafter, with the open call to everyone alike - "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, I will give you rest". Such a message of affirmation and hope is bound to have wide spread repercussions on a belief system of defeatism and despair and that negates all that is rich in life itself. People whose lives have been controlled by myths and mythologies now begin to possess a sense of history.

Christ and Christian concepts have permeated into the life, thought and the sacred scriptures of the people of India.

"I desire to speak of Christ", said Keshub Chandra Sen, "I am not a Christian...I have not been nursed on

the laps of Christian parents...yet I must speak of Christ...my love for Christ constrains me to speak of Him...my loyalty to Jesus is my apology...Are not Christian ideas and institutions taking their roots in the soul of this vast country?...it is not politics, it is not diplomacy (of the British) that has laid a firm hold on India...no, all these cannot hold India in subjection...no...if you have to secure the attachment of the religions of India, it must be through spiritual influence and moral suasion...it is Christ who rules. Gentlemen, you cannot deny that your heart has been touched, conquered and subjugated by this supreme power. That power...is Christ"<sup>4</sup>.

Yes, the hand that simply turned water into a tasteful and colourful wine has also transformed the culture and belief systems of India and its heritage.

### **Did Christ Visit India?**

Even several hundred years before Christ, there were well established trade links between the Middle East and India. There was also a steady flow of immigrants to India and an exchange of ideas, faith and precepts.

There is a theory that one of the "three" wise men, in fact the one who carried the frankincense, who went to visit the baby Jesus was the Indian King Viswamitra.

There are two traditions, Muslim and Eastern that Jesus himself came to India. According to the Aquarian gospel, Jesus was brought to India by prince Ravanna himself at the age of twelve, journeyed through the Himalayas to Tibet and Lhasa, Varanasi and Jagnath of Orsis (now Orissa) and that Jesus astonished the teachers, incurred the anger of the Brahmans because He was mixing with the Sudras and the out-castes and was teaching them the eternal truth and the Vedas and eventually was chased away by the Brahmanas<sup>5</sup>.

Now the question arises...if Jesus' Indian connection is ever proved, do we have to change our image and understanding of Him completely? No, not at all. As a matter of fact, the people of India will become more obligated to Him...because Jesus Christ was an "Indian".

Pundit Jawharlal Nehru said that "Christianity came to India long before it went to Western Europe"<sup>6</sup>. The late Dr Rajendra Prasad, former President of India, felt that it was a matter of pride to the Indians that St Thomas came to India and that Christianity in India has a longer history than that of Europe<sup>7</sup>. Some scholars might challenge the idea that St Thomas came to India as the first missionary, but Dr S Radhakrishnan contends, "What is obvious is that there have been Christians in the West Coast of India from very early times"<sup>8</sup>. Christianity took root in India under three major, historical, and cultural traditions;

1. Christianity according to the Dravidian tradition (St Thomas)
2. Christianity according to the Syrian tradition
3. Christianity according to the European tradition

So historic and unique is the advent of Christ and so powerful is the message of His gospel that after it had reached the Indian soil, in the very first century; Would it not have sent ripples and made its visible and invisible impact felt? Yes, it would have.

I don't want to say more about this here as scholars like Dr Deivanayagam, Dr Samuel Johnson and Dr Kumaradoss have written volumes on this subject.

### **What is "Dravidian Christianity"?**

It was in Antioch the disciples of Christ were first called Christians. Before this gained currency, Christians were simultaneously called by various other names such as the disciples, household of God, believers, witnesses

and the people of the book. The early Christians in south India came to be known as - *saanror* (witness-Thirukural), *yavanas* (Greek, Roman and Jewish foreigners in India), Syrians and even as people of the book, *vethakarar* - (especially in South India)<sup>9</sup>. In the same manner, numerous sects were known mostly by their schools of thought, like the Vedantists, Saivites, Vishnavites, etc. Interestingly, according to some established scholarship, most of these sects were greatly influenced by Christian teachings, though they didn't openly identify themselves as Christians. At the same time it may be observed that they did not call themselves Hindus either.

Only when the Aryanization of the Indian belief systems began after the 15<sup>th</sup> century, words like "Hindu" and "Hinduism" were adopted for the sake of convenience by the Muslim and the British rulers, who classified all the non-Muslim, non-Christian, non-Sikh and non-Parsees as "Hindus". Even till 1911 it had been a puzzle for the census-takers to decide who is a "Hindu" and who is not a "Hindu". Millions of untouchables were listed along with the tribals as "animists" in the 1911 census<sup>10</sup>. We will not delve into this controversy any further. But suffice it to say that although some of the major contributions of the early Christianity might have got absorbed into the Indian belief systems, for academic purposes those systems are classified as "Dravidian Christianity" by some of the Oriental scholars.

### **The Vyaasar Dravidian School**

It is a well accepted scholarship that it was Vedantha Vyaasar, a Dravidian scholar, who reduced into writing all the oral traditions of the Vedas, Upanishads. According to Dr Deivanayagam and other Oriental scholars, Vedantha Vyaasar (or his school) was responsible for spreading the Dravidian form of Christianity in India. Vyaasar approved of the rituals like offering incense, sacrifice and prayers found in the core



of the Semitic-Dravidian religions. So might have gleaned and compiled their thoughts and oral traditions into songs, giving them new script forms and classified them into four vedas.

Oral tradition of Vedas might have been in existence in various forms. But when Veda Vyaasar edited them, he took the liberty to comment as if there was not need for sacrifice anymore (especially the X Mandal of the Rig Veda). Because he finds the fulfillment of sacrifice since Prajabati himself has sacrificed his body.

The Vyaasar school also wrote the *Brahma Sutras* and the *Bhagavad Gita*. In later years three scholars, Sankara, Ramanuja and Madava, rose to comment on the works of Vyaasar. These scholars expounded three types of philosophies - *Advaita*, *Dvaita*, *Vishistadvaita* and taught them to their devotees.

This resulted in the division of the Vedanta cult into two major divisions - 'Saivism' and 'Vaishnavam'. The philosophies of 'Saivasiddhantam' and 'Vaishnavism' reflect the New Testament. The Upper Castes in derision called Saivism as the "Sudra Religion" (religion of the slaves).

### **Christian Precepts in Thirukural**

The world renowned Thirukkural was composed by Thiruvalluvar, a Tamil Dravidian (an "out-caste"). He seems to have lived sometime between the first and second century. It has also been proved that Thiruvalluvar lived in the Mylapore area of Madras, where we find a shrine built in his honour as well as the tomb of St Thomas on which the St Thomas Cathedral is built. There are an Armenian and a Portuguese church as well as a Christian inscription of the 5th century<sup>11</sup>.

It is believed that Thiruvalluvar came under the influence of St Thomas himself or at least his followers.



His work, *Thirukural*, has 1330 couplets. Dr G U Pope, a missionary, statesman and a scholar of the 19th century, believed that Thiruvalluvar drew his inspiration from the Christian scriptures...The belief of Dr Pope that Christian ideas expressed in the *Kural* presuppose a regular inter-connection between the *Kural* and the Christian scripture. However, this cannot yet be taken for granted.

Dr Deivanayagam, Archbishop Arulappa and several others who have done extensive research on the *Kural* are convinced that the references are in legion as to the influence of the Christian thought upon *Thirukural*. The first chapter, according to these great scholars, talks about God the Father, the second chapter about the Power from Above, the Holy Spirit and the third chapter talks about *Nittar* the one who gave up his glory<sup>12</sup>.

In a number of these couplets, the first century Thiruvalluvar's knowledge of Christ and gospel comes out strongly. Let me quote one such couplet here.

"They shall live eternally, who stood in the path of Him who detached (freed) falsehood and gave up the five senses (meaning body in Tamil) on the gallows (inferring cross?)"

### **Christ in the Vedas, Upanishads and Vedanta**

The Indian sages were always striving to attain perfection (*sadana*). Their quest for God and to realise the ultimate truth was perpetual and strong. This spiritual thirst is evident in the beautiful prayer from the Upanishads;

From the unreal lead me to the real

From darkness lead me to light

From death lead me to immortality<sup>13</sup>

God has not left the people of India without a witness. This prayer was fulfilled, we believe, with the

coming of the Supreme Lord, who is *Sachidananda*, even Jesus Christ, the Truth, the Way, the Light and Eternal Life.

It is a well accepted fact that the Vedas and the Upanishads were in oral tradition for over a thousand years. It was sometime around the second or the fourth century that they were edited and put into writing after the advent of Christ and His teaching became so prevalent. It might sound unusual to call Veda Vyaasar a Christian. Even Paul the Apostle of Christ never called himself a Christian either.

"Search into the scriptures and they testify of me" said Jesus. As we look into the Vedas, especially the Tenth Mandala, it is the "New Testament" of the Vedas with a clear distinction from the rest of the Vedic songs on sacrifice. The Tenth Mandala being the last of the Mandalas (written sometime around the 3rd or 4th century), speaks as if there was no need for sacrifice any more because Prajabati has offered himself as the Supreme Sacrifice once and for all. Rig Veda 10:90 talks about the one who was and will be the authority of eternal life. He, for God's sake chose death to be his portion. He chose not for men's sake, a life eternal. The sacrificed Brahaspati the Rsi. Yama delivered up his own body (Rig X:13-4 R)<sup>14</sup>. And this Purusha Prajabati, as interpreted by Sayana Chariyar and Sadhu Chellappa from Rig Veda and the Chandogya Upanishad is none other than the person of Jesus Christ<sup>15</sup>.

As admitted by Adi Sankara himself, his *Advaita* philosophy was based on the teaching of a panchama (out-caste). Sankara was born in the region (today's Kerala) where there was a strong presence of Christianity and the Church from the very first century. The *Advaita* concept that 'God and we are not two, but we are one' was taught by Sankara, even as Christ said "I and my Father are one" and the Pauline teaching of (*en Christo*)

in Christ that "In Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:38)... we in Him and He in us, was Paul's observation. "The Kingdom of God is within you" is much reflected in the teachings of Sankara's (7th century AD) *Aham Brahmani Tatvam Asi* (I am Brahman and thou are that).

### **The Bhakti Movement (A period of Spiritual Awakening)**

Far moved from the cold world of Sankara and his impersonal God (Nirguna Brahman), Ramanujacharya and Madvacharya departed from *Advaita* to *Vishitadvaita*, not one but two (*Aham Brahmasmi Attvamasi* - I am Brahman and thou art not that). This set in motion a new spiritual awakening - *Bhakti* Movement. Saivism and Vaishnavism contributed quite considerably to this movement. As a matter of fact, the early *Bhakti* Movement was found in south India even before the 7th century. It spread to North India after the 12th century.

Rudolf Otto defines the *Bhakti* Movement as "faith in salvation through an eternal God and through a saving fellowship with Him"<sup>16</sup>. That might sound very much Christian. If you study some of the other characteristics of this movement, one will be convinced that the Christian concept has played a vital role in birth and development of *Bhakti* Movement. The features of this movement listed below, further prove toward this end;

1. The *Bhakti* Movement bid farewell to the worship of the gods of nature, like Vayoo (wind), Indira, Varunan and Mithiran, while Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma took the front-line<sup>17</sup>.
2. Worship and devotion to a personal God (*Iswara*), a God of one's choice (*ishta deva*)
3. Belief in One Supreme God of Love and Grace - we are saved by God's grace, not by our deeds

("The cat theory" of how a mother cat carries its young by the neck — that is grace, as opposed to the "monkey theory" of how the baby monkey hangs on to its mother — which is good work, was much talked about during the *Bhakti* Movement.

4. One God in three forms as seen in the Christian doctrine, found its way into the *bhakti* movements (refer chart opposite page).
5. The doctrine of incarnation (*avatar*) becoming predominant.
6. The doctrine of fulfillment of sacrifice prevailed - practice of blood sacrifice was absent or frowned upon.
7. Caste system (*varnashra dharm*) and inequality were condemned. Ramananda, the fifth in succession after Ramanuja, broke completely with caste, "Let no one ask a man's caste or sect", he said; "whoever adores God, he is God's own"<sup>18</sup>.

The concept that God will come only in the form of animals or half-animals or half-humans, progressed into a more mature thinking, resulting in Krishna and Rama becoming incarnated gods. (It might be worth mentioning the findings of several scholars that in Goa as well as in Bengal the word for Krishna is *Kritna* and *Chritna*. Dr J N Farquhar asserts that the Scythian race called *Krishnas* seized all the western frontiers of India soon after the Christian era.<sup>19</sup>)

The *Bhakti* Movement also gave rise to the development of the Doctrine of Grace, which is very much foreign to the Indian concept. The word 'grace' comes from the Greek root word *karis* or *karitas* (*krupa* in sanskrit) from which Christ and Krishan must have derived, as some scholars assume. Though it is an

interesting observation, the life of Christ as found in the Gospel is quite incomparable to the Krishna of the *Puranas*.

Dr Sudhakar Chattopodhyaya feels that the concept of *bakthi* and the doctrine of God's grace in Vaishnavism show the influence of Christian Doctrines<sup>20</sup>. I am quoting one of the most cautious scholars of our times, Dr Susmita Pande, who says that "It has even been held that the development of the true religion of the heart of *bhakti* really belongs to Medieval India, presumably owing its effervescence to the fertilizing influences of Islam, if not Christianity" and concludes "that the concept of *bhakti* and God's grace in the above account (Vaishnavism) shows the influence of Christian doctrines"<sup>21</sup>. An influential western scholar also found in Vaishnavism "an approximation towards the Christian idea of God's unity and personality, for it must be admitted", he said, "that it has more common ground with Christianity than any other form of non-Christian faith"<sup>22</sup>.

In a way the *Bhakti* Movement was reciprocal. Just as the Christian concepts found their way into the Indian belief systems, the Movement enriched Christian *bhakti* and spirituality as well. Naryana Vaman Tilak of Maharashtra, H A Krishna Pillai of the Tamil Country and Chowdhary Purusottam of Andhra were foremost among these "upper castes" *bhaktas*, who crossed the bridge and came into the Christian fold. Their Christian *bhakti* songs<sup>23</sup> are on the lips of thousands of Christians and non-Christians of these linguistic regions.

### **Moderan Religious Movements - India Responds to Christ and Christianity**

India was ruled by the Buddhists for 800 years, by the Muslims for 900 years and for about 250 years by the Portuguese, the French, and the British. Most of the rulers, especially the British, followed a policy of non-



interference in the practice of religion. Evil practices like child marriage, polygamy, human sacrifice, torturing of animals during sacrifices, human torture at sacrifices, gross obscenity practised at festivals, temple prostitution and sati (burning of widows) were not disturbed. Even the civilized British rulers feared to bring any legislation against these practices, dreading the wrath of the Brahmins who, according to Abbe Je Dubios a French Catholic monk, had a magical control over the masses. Dubios also felt that even if the British Government had made an attempt to bring about social reforms, they would have faced insurmountable obstructions<sup>24</sup>.

As a matter of fact, in the early years of their rule (*de facto* or *de jure*) the British even encouraged the "natives" in carrying out their evil practices both directly and indirectly. They brought the temples under their management and patronage and granted large sums of money for sacrifices and festivals because there was good revenue. The rulers even witnessed and supervised the sad business of widows jumping into the funeral pyres of their husbands<sup>25</sup>.

Because of this policy the British rulers prevented missionaries from entering India. William Carey, who came as a chaplain and a clerk with the East India Company in Calcutta was penalised for his interest in the study of India and its religious systems and languages. He moved to Serampore, a Danish colony, where he found some freedom to carry out his study as well as social his reform activities. Carey, Marshman and Ward, the famous Serampore trio established the Serampore College and became pioneers of education and social reform. Another great man among the early missionaries was Alexander Duff, who is considered to be the father of the modern education in India. The British, meanwhile, relaxed their policies and removed restrictions. Hundreds and thousands of missionaries

both Catholic and Protestant flooded the country and built their institutions. This paved the way for modern education, science and literature, industrialisation and modernisation leading to urbanisation. All of these are the logical outcome of the Biblical religion. Today there are over 30,000 Christian schools, colleges and professional institutions. This is the greatest contribution of Christianity to India's heritage...a vast infrastructure for nation building.

Since the East India Company ruled India initially from Calcutta and because the modern Christian Missionary Movement was also born in Calcutta, most of these activities and reform movements were centered on the Bengal Province. Men like Raja Ram Mohun Roy came under the direct influence of Carey, Marshman and Ward. Debates and discussions on the ways and means of reforming the Indian society were constantly going on in the halls and auditoriums of Bengal.

Though Ram Mohun Roy was a polygamist himself, he came out openly against polygamy, child marriage, prostitution and sati. He became the founder of the *Brahma Samaj*, which was followed by Keshub Chandra Sen's Church of the New Dispensation. Great national heroes like Rabindranath Tagore, Vivekananda, all came out of this movement. Not only Bengal but the nation as a whole responded to the challenges of Jesus Christ. It also led to counter reformation within the belief systems of India.

But on the other hand, many great national leaders either came closer to the Kingdom of God or made an entry into the Household of God. Some accepted Christ as one of their gods or *avatars* (incarnations), while others accepted Him as their Lord and Saviour. On the whole, Christ was accepted and became an integral part of the life and thought of the people of India.

This led to some of the greatest social and religious transformation that the country of India had ever seen. Because of the strong influence of the Christian schools, the modern education and the teachings of Christ, the country has seen some very outstanding national leaders with very high moral and ethical values. Such characteristics are rare commodities among the leaders of today. Though they might not have understood and interpreted Christ in the way Christian theologians would have expected, every one of them was attracted to Christ and began interpreting Him in the way they understood Him.

For Raja Ram Mohun Roy, "Jesus is the first born of every creation pre-existing in Heaven that God had sent to the earth as Christ or Messiah"<sup>26</sup>. Ram Mohan Roy went as far as accepting Christ as the Messiah and the anointed son of God, but not God Himself. Nevertheless, he was a great reformer.

To P C Mozoomdar Jesus was "The Oriental Christ and the unfolding Spirit". Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya thought of Christ as *Chit*. Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the guru of Swami Vivekananda, claimed to have had a vision of Christ as a culmination of a series of visions he had of other gods and *avatars*.

For Swami Vivekananda, "Jesus Christ is a *Jivanmukth* and a *Karmayogi*." He interpreted Christ in reference to his Vedantic philosophy. As a Vedantist he felt at home with Christian teaching. That was why he was well accepted in the West. A Vedantist does not accept the caste system. Only those who accept the fatherhood of God could accept the brotherhood of mankind. Swami Vivekananda was very much in that group...definitely not in the group of those who believed in the superiority of caste.

Swami Vivekananda said, "Jesus Christ is one of the incarnations in line with Buddha and Krishna". He

emphasised less on the ethical humanity of Jesus Christ. But he asserted Christ's divinity, of course in his Vedantic understanding rather than in the Trinitarian sense of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. He was overwhelmed by the uniqueness of Jesus and openly declared, "If I as an Oriental have to worship Jesus of Nazareth, there is only one way left for me, that is to worship him as God and nothing else"<sup>27</sup>.

Dr Radhakrishnan considered Christ as a mystic. Mahatma Gandhi fashioned his life after Jesus Christ and drew so much of inspiration from the Sermon on the Mount. Though he was against conversion from one religion to another, whatever may be one's religion he said..."your lives will not be perfect unless you reverently study the teachings of Christ". The Mahatma also said, "To be a good Hindu also meant that I would be a good Christian. There was no need for me to join your crowd to be a believer in the beauty of the teaching of Jesus or try to follow his example"<sup>28</sup>.

"I pity the Christian who does not revere the Hindu Christ"... "I pity the Hindu who does not see the beauty in Jesus Christ's character", said Swami Vivekananda<sup>29</sup>.

Mahatma Gandhi and Swami Vivekananda are not alone. There are millions and millions of those "Hindu-Christians" in India. Because for an Indian mind there is no violation of truth. The attitude of an average Indian is...live and let live. Those evil elements that might have chased the non-violent religions like Buddhism out of India, speared St Thomas, the apostle of the gospel of love and truth and even assassinated Mahatma Gandhi or demolished the 500 year old Babri Masjid at Ayodhya. But they are only a microscopic minority. The people of India by and large have rejected them as traitors and aliens.

India is great because of the great reformers like Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar. The spiritual heritage of India



is not determined by the numerous volumes of sacred books, the songs and *bhajans* sung and mantras chanted in praise of the unending list of gods and goddesses we have produced.

If we are going to take Dr Radhakrishnan's words seriously, please mark it once again, "A true religion is revolutionary"...a true religion must abolish class, caste and all other unjust restrictions on man's liberty. In Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar we see the embodiment of that revolution and inspiration to set people at liberty. It is Dr Ambedkar who is at the head of India's real heritage. Let me make a declaration here at this international forum that India's 21st century belongs to Dr Ambedkar...and it is he who said his ideal was Moses, one of the greatest liberators of mankind. Babasaheb also exclaimed;

"When I read the New Testament I find the very antidote my people need for the poison of...which they have been drinking for three thousand years"<sup>30</sup>.

So here is another great soul of India whose life was very much influenced by Christianity.

Before I move onto the concluding part of my address, I would like to quote the striking words of Keshub Chandra Sen;

"The time is coming and now is when India shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The time has come when you can no longer be inimical or indifferent to Christ. Say unto Christ as unto your best friend - welcome! I say emphatically and I say before you all, that Christ is already present in you. He is in you even when you are unconscious of his presence. Even if your lips deny Christ, your hearts have secretly accepted him. For Christ is 'the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world'. If you have in you the spirit of truth and filial devotion and self-sacrifice that is Christ. What is in a name?"<sup>31</sup>



### Christ Incarnated in India

The greatest of all the contribution ever made toward the spiritual heritage of India was Christ Himself. The education, science, modernisation and the industrialisation that came from the West along with Christianity, can in no way considered to be the supreme contribution...nay not even the Christian ministry of compassion and care for the destitute, the underprivileged and the out-castes. All these have undoubtedly changed the face of India completely. Even the Constitution of India, according to Golwalker, a staunch leader of the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* was very much Christian. He burst out;

"Our Constitution too is just cumbersome and heterogeneous, piecing together of various articles from various constitutions of western countries. It has absolutely nothing which can be called our own. Is there a single word of reference in its guiding principles as to what our national mission is and what our keynote in life is?"<sup>32</sup>

Whether Golwalker liked it or not, the country could not go back to the days of barbarianism and slavery. One wonders whether he expects Ambedkar's Constitution to be rewritten basing on the inhuman and unequal laws of the Manusmirti? The country has determined to march forward with the times. Christ as the symbol of progress is there with His presence and He is participating in nation-building as M M Thomas interprets<sup>33</sup>.

Yet this is not all that matters. The western countries have all that the world of materialism can offer. That did not save them. As a matter of fact, that has become a stumbling block to their spiritual growth and development. The greatest change that has taken place in the country of India has been and still continues to be is the transformation Christ offers to the life of the

individuals and the society. In Christ there is upward mobility - socially, morally, economically and spiritually.

Judge B C Chatterji, who comes from a Kulin Brahmin community in West Bengal and became a Christian in 1863 said, "Christianity is something better than I thought it would be" and "Christ's spirit of forgiveness on the Cross and His willingness to face death", was the most fascinating trait in Christ. Through his death Jesus had conquered the whole world.

Like Chatterji there were millions of others. We have already talked about Narayan Vaman Tilak and H A Krishna Pillai, who accepted Christ as their Lord and God of their lives. There were numerous others; Swami John Dharma Theerthan (Cf. Portrait), Prof Ram Chandra, Venkayya, Baba Padmanji, Guru Charan Bose, Ganga Dhar Sarangi, Mathura Nath Bose, Chandra Leela (priestess), Prince Rama Verma of Cochin, Vethamanikam and Moses Walsalam.

Paul Sudhakar, a nephew of Mr V K Krishnan Menon and a student of Dr Radhakrishnan, claims that he found Christ not in the New Testament but in the Bhagavad Gita. There are millions of others who found new life in Jesus Christ in such mysterious ways.

Pandita Ramabai, a Brahmin lady who became a spirit-filled Christian early in her life, felt that by becoming a follower of Christ, she had not betrayed her ancient culture and tradition. But on the other hand she learnt that her ancient religion became more meaningful and enriched only with her experience in Christ.

Sadhu Sundar Singh of Punjab became a Christian at the age of 17 after he had seen a vision of Christ. Today Sadhu Sundar Singh is a household name in the Christian families of India. Many parents name their children after him. He was one of the greatest Christian saints in the history of the Church. He never stayed more than one

day in any particular place. The wandering Christian monk went all over the world and presented Christ in the Indian cup.

Once when Sadhu Sundar Singh knocked at the door of a Christian home in England, a little girl who opened the door and saw the Christian saint rushed to her mom and said, "mother, mother Jesus is at the door!". Later in his life when a reporter asked, "What did you find in Christianity that you did not find in other religions?"...Sadhu Sundar Singh simply replied, "Christ."

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, the greatest contributor to the spiritual heritage of India...the Christ Himself. He is the catalyst who alone can hold the social, historical and ethnic fabric of India together. Christ of the history has reincarnated in the mythological India and He has become the Christ of Faith (*dharm*) and experience (*anubava*), the *Nishkalank Avatar* (sinless incarnation), *Jivanmukta*, *Sachidananda* and *Karmayogi*. Christ does not belong to any particular race, religion or creed. He is the Lord of all and the God of all...the cosmic Christ...the light that lighteth every man that came into the world. I appeal to the world community to try that Christ...the Christ of every road...above history, race, religion or territory...and let us in and through Christ find a better world order, peaceful coexistence, religious tolerance, non-violence and reconciliation. The ground around the Cross is a level ground. Christ came not to destroy but to fulfil. He can fulfil the aspirations and quench the thirst of anyone, any race, any culture and civilisation anytime in History anywhere in the world.

Christ is in every religion. We have to only unveil that hidden Christ. "That from which the world came forth and to which it returns and by which it is sustained, that "that" is Christ."<sup>34</sup> says Fr Raymond (commenting on the *Brahma Sutras*).

"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold, them also I must bring", said Jesus "and they shall hear my voice and there shall be one Fold and one Shepherd" (John 10:16).

Yes, Jesus Christ claims that His sheep are there in every fold and every religion but the concern of the Good Shepherd is to bring them into one fold in Him. God bless you all!

### End Notes:

- <sup>1</sup> 'But for the sake of the prosperity of the worlds, he (Brahman) caused the Brahmana, the Kshatriya, the Vaisya and the Sudra to proceed from his mouth, his arms, his thighs and his feet' Law Book of Manu Ch I:31.
- <sup>2</sup> 'Let him (king) never slay a Brahmana, though he may have committed all (possible) crimes; let him (king) banish such an (offender), leaving all his property (to him) and (his body) unhurt'.  
  
'No greater crime is known on earth than slaying a Brahmana; a king, therefore, must not even conceive in his mind the thought of killing a Brahmana' Law Book of Manu, Ch VIII: 380, 381.
- <sup>3</sup> 'But a Sudra, whether bought or un-bought, he may compel to do servile work; for he was created by the Self-existent (Svayambhu) to be the slave of a Brahmana'.  
  
'A Sudra, though emancipated by his master, is not released from servitude; since that is innate in him, who can set him free from it?'  
  
'A Brahmana may confidently seize the goods of (his) Sudra (slave); for, as that (slave) can have no property, his master may take his possessions'.  
  
'(The king) should carefully compel Vaisyas and Sudras to perform the work (prescribed) for them; for if these two (castes) swerved from their duties, they would throw this (whole) world into confusion' Law Book of Manu Ch VIII:413, 414, 417, 418.



- <sup>4</sup> India Asks: who is Christ?, Keshub Chandra Sen's lecture of April 9, 1879, edited by David C Scott, Keshub Chandra Sen, 1979, published by CLS.
- <sup>5</sup> Jesus Lived in India, Holger Kersten (first) published in W Germany by Droemer/Knaur, Munich, 1983, Pages 20-23.
- <sup>6</sup> "You maybe surprised to learn that Christianity came to India long before it went to England or Western Europe, and when even in Rome it was a despised and prescribed sect — within hundred years or so of the death of Jesus, Christian missionaries came to South India by sea. They were received courteously and permitted to preach their new faith. They converted a large number of people, and their descendants have lived there, with varying fortunes, to this day. Most of them belong to old Christian sects which have ceased to exist in Europe". (Jawharlal Nehru in Glimpses of World History - 1934, quoted by Pothan, The Syrian Christians of Kerala, Asia Publishing House, Madras, 1963, Page 3)
- <sup>7</sup> "Remember St Thomas came to India when many of the countries of Europe had not yet become Christian, and so, those Indians who trace their Christianity to him have a longer history and a higher ancestry than that of Christians of many of the European Countries. And it is really a matter of pride to us that it so happened." The Syrian Christians of Kerala, S G Pothan, Asia Publishing House, Madras, 1963, Page 1.
- <sup>8</sup> "Christianity has flourished in India from the beginning of the Christian era. The Syrian Christians of Malabar believe that their form of Christianity is Apostolic, derived directly from the Apostle, Thomas. They contend that their version of the Christian faith is distinctive and independent of the forms established by St Peter and St Paul in the West. What is obvious is that there have been Christians in the West Coast of India from very early times. They were treated with great respect by the Hindus, whose princes built for them churches", Dr S Radhakrishnan in East and West in Religion, 1958, quoted by S G Pothan, The Syrian Christians of Kerala, Asia Publishing House, Madras, Page 3.



<sup>9</sup> "Certain important factors found in Sangam literature are very helpful in reconstructing history, especially concerning the beginning of the Christian era. One such factor which was not given much attention, concerning the race called 'Yavanar'. Many Tamil scholars have mentioned about them, but not from the Christian point of view. A few references are given below.

'The Greeks called their mother tongue 'Iaovanes'. Later on, it came to be known as 'Yavanam' and the people as 'Yavanar'. The word 'Yavanar' originally referred to Greeks but later on it came to refer to all the foreign peoples in the Tamil Country, Greeks, Syrians and Jews along with Romans who had flourished trade relationships with the Dravidians and even had permanent settlements in the Tamil Country'. The Tamil kings had engaged Yavana warriors as their body guards. And Yavana coins were in large circulation in the Tamil Country" (Presenting Christ Through 'Sacred Literature' of India - With special reference to Thirukural and Saiva Siddantha, Dr M Deivanayagam, Mission Mandate, 1992, Edited by Dr M Ezra Sargunam, Pages 308-315)

<sup>10</sup> It is well to remember that the strict connotation of the word Hinduism is racial and social rather than theological...E A Gait, Census Commissioner for India, in his 'Notes on Census Returns of Hindus', dated Simla, July 12, 1910 (see Indian Social Reformer, Bombay November 20, 1912), discusses at length the question as to who are to be enumerated as Hindus. 'The complaint has often made that the census returns of Hindus are misleading, as they include millions of people who are not really Hindus at all, who are denied the ministrations of the Brahmins, and are forbidden to enter Hindu temples, and who in many cases are regarded as so unclean that their touch, or even their proximity causes pollution. There is of course much truth in the criticism, but the fact that Hinduism has no definite creed makes it difficult to lay down any definite test as to who is, and who is not a Hindu. A man may believe in the whole Hindu pantheon, or only in particular gods, or, for that matter, in no gods at all; he may sacrifice

or abstain from sacrifices; he may eat flesh and fish or abstain from so doing; but he is still regarded as a Hindu if he belongs to a recognised Hindu caste, does not deny the supremacy of the Brahmins, and abstains from open disregard of the restrictions observed by his caste fellows'. Mr Gait proposes the following as some of the tests which might be applied to discover whether any certain class may be regarded as Hindus or not. '1. Do the members of the caste of tribe worship the great Hindu gods? 2. Are they allowed to enter Hindu temples or make offerings at the shrine? 3. Will good Brahmins act as their priests? 4. Will degraded Brahmins do so? In that case, are they recognised as Brahmins by persons outside the caste, or are they Brahmins only in name? 5. Will clean castes take water from them? 6. Do they cause pollution, (a) by touch, (b) by proximity?' These tests would cut off from Hinduism all the out-castes, who are a very considerable number in the census... (Census of 1911, Vol XII, Pt I, Ch 4, paras 4, 6, 22, 26)

<sup>11</sup> Sacred Kural (tamil), Dr G U Pope, 1886, Page 11-12.

<sup>12</sup> "The first chapter (of Thirukural), unmistakably is an invocation of God and the fourth chapter is a brief summary of the Book. The two intervening chapters are puzzling. The chapters, titled as 'Van' and 'Nittar' are interpreted as 'rain' and 'ascetics' respectively. Why should Thiruvalluvar speak about rain and ascetics in the chapters supposed to be an invocation of God? And curiously enough there is a separate chapter devoted to the Ascetics titled, 'Turavaram'. No scholar could come out with a proper explanation. Some tried to explain it away by claiming that the two chapters could be an interpolation. In the chapter 'Van', the author uses the words 'vin'(cp 3) 'visumpu' (cp 4), 'elili' (cp 5), 'puyal ennum vari'(cp 6). In one of the couplets in the chapter, he says that the world cannot exist without 'nir'(water) (cp 7) and moral life is not possible without 'van'. Both 'nir' and 'van' were translated as rain. Is moral life not possible without rain? He clarifies that where the author meant water he clearly says 'nir' and he asserts that the world cannot exist without

water. But moral life needs to be sustained by the Power from Above. The word 'van' means sky or firmament. The other phrase 'puyal ennum vari' further clarifies it. The phrase means force like a strong wind. As the life cannot exist without water or rain, mankind cannot live a moral life without the strong power, Grace from Above".

"The third chapter 'Nittar' would mean one who left or departed, or gave up. It doesn't mean one who departed the earthly life but one who gave up His glory in Heaven and came down to the earth. The word 'aintavitan' (cp 8) should be taken together with 'nittar'. The word occurs only twice in the Book, i.e. in the first chapter and the third chapter. The word is divisible. 'Aintu' and 'avittan' 'aintu' means the five senses. This word repeatedly occurs in Tamil classics to mean the Body. And 'avittan' is used by the author in the Kural in other couplets to mean sacrifice. Because the word was wrongly understood as 'controlled', it eluded the true meaning. It means the One who sacrificed His Body'. Further the word 'aintavittan' occurs only twice in the Book. In the first chapter it says 'Porivayil Aintavittan' which means One who sacrificed Himself on an instrument. The word 'pori' is still in modern usage and means either an instrument or a weapon. The second place where the word occurs, is in the third chapter. It speaks of the Power of the 'Aintavittan' witnessed by the leader of the Angels or the leader of the Angels is the Witness for the Power of the Aintavittan". (Presenting Christ Through 'Sacred Literature' of India - With special reference to Thirukural and Saiva Siddantha, Dr M Deivanayagam, Mission Mandate, 1992, Edited by Dr M Ezra Sargunam)

<sup>13</sup> Brihadanranyaka Upanishad 1:3:28

<sup>14</sup> Rig X:13-4 R, Ralph T H Griffith, The Hymns of the Rig Veda, edited by J C Shastri, Motilal Banarasidass, Delhi, Reprint 1976.

<sup>15</sup> Purusha Prajabati, Sadhu Chellappa, Agni Publications.

<sup>16</sup> Rudolf Otto, Christianity and the Religion of Grace (1929, Page 13

- <sup>17</sup> The Ancient Tamils: Their life and worship, K Kailasapathi, 1978, Page 18
- <sup>18</sup> Quoted in C S Paul's, The Suffering God (1932), Page 104.
- <sup>19</sup> "The Scythian race called Krishnas seized all the western frontiers of India soon after the Christian era and in about the middle of the century conquered the Hindu government of Patna and thus formed a vast empire stretching from central Asia to the Gangetic plains. Not long after these events, as it would seem, the Bhagavad Gita arose, in which Krishna is represented as a full incarnation of Vishnu and as the eternal Brahman of the Upanishads. Vaishnavatheism was thus formed and other sects hastened to follow the great example. About the same time or a little later, Mahayana Buddhism was formed in which the Buddha almost became an eternal God..." An Outline of the Religious Literature of India, Dr J N Farquhar, Motilal Banarasidoss, Delhi 110 007, (first) edition 1920, Page 78-79.
- <sup>20</sup> Evolution of Hindu Sects upto the time of Sankaracharya, Sudhakar Chattopodhyaya, Munshiram Manoharlal, Oriental Publishers, New Delhi (first published in 1970), Page 60.
- <sup>21</sup> Susmita Pande, Birth of bhakti in Indian religions and art, Page VII.
- <sup>22</sup> Monier Williams, An Outline of India's Cultural Heritage.
- <sup>23</sup> Christ as Mother:
- Tenderest Mother-Guru mine  
Saviour, where is love like Thine?  
A cool and never-fading shade  
To souls by sin's fierce heat dismayed:  
Right swiftly at my earliest cry  
He came to save me from the sky:  
He made him friends of those that mourn

With hearts by meek contribution torn:  
 For me, a sinner, yea, for me  
 He hastened to the bitter Tree:  
 And still within me living, too,  
 He fills my being through and through.  
 My heart is all one melody -  
 'Hail to Thee, Christ! all hail to Thee!  
 (Narayan Vaman Tilak, from the 'Collection of *abhangas*',  
 translated by J C Winslow, Page 85)  
 Who crowned thy Head with cruel thorns?  
 Put sceptre rough into thy Hand?  
 Who spat upon thy lotus-Face,  
 And mocked thee with insulting hands?  
 Who smote upon thy beauteous Brow,  
 And thrust into thy Side the spear?  
 Whose the nails which pierced thy Hands and Feet,  
 That thy gracious Hands might save mankind?  
 Was it not I—ah! wretched me -  
 Did not I cause thy agony?  
 O Thou that calledst the dying thief,  
 And ope'd to him the gate of Heaven!  
 O heavenly King, who came to be  
 My Guide and Joy eternally!  
 (H A Krishna Pillai, 'Rakshanya Manoharam III verse 2,  
 translated by E E White)

<sup>24</sup> Abbe J A Dubois, as quote by J N Farquhar in the Modern Religious Movements in India, published by Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt Ltd, 1977, Page 13.



<sup>25</sup> "They took under their management and patronage a large number of Hindu temples. They advanced money for rebuilding important shrines and for repairing other, and paid the salaries of the temple officials, even down to the courtesans, which were a normal feature of the great temples of the South. They granted large sums of money for sacrifices and festivals and for the feeding of Brahmans. Salvoes of cannon were fired on the occasion of the greater festivals; and government officials were ordered to be present and to show their interest in the celebrations. Even cruel and immoral rites, such as hook-swing, practised in the worship of the gods, and the burning of widows, were carried out under British supervision. In order to pay for all these things, a pilgrim-tax was imposed, which not only recouped the Government for their outlay, but brought them a handsome income as well. Reformers in England and India found it a long and toilsome business to get this patronage of idolatry by a Christian Government put down. The last temple was handed over as late as 1862", Modern Religious Movements in India, J N Farquhar, published by Munshiram Manoharlal Publisher Pvt Ltd (Indian edition 1977), Page 9.

<sup>26</sup> The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance, M M Thomas (first published in 1969), SCM Press Ltd, p. 19.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid* Page 124

<sup>28</sup> As quoted by M M Thomas, The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance, SCM Press Ltd, 1969, p. 208.

<sup>29</sup> Bassuk E Daniel, Incarnation in Hinduism and Christianity, The MacMillan Press Ltd, 1987, p. 180.

<sup>30</sup> As quoted by Donald A McGavaran, Understanding Church Growth, William B Eerdmans Publishing Co, USA, 1970, p. 250-51.

<sup>31</sup> Keshub Chandra Sen, as quoted by M M Thomas in The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance, SCM Press Ltd, p. 60.

<sup>32</sup> M S Golwalker, A Bunch of Thoughts, 1996, p. 277.

<sup>33</sup> Christian Participation in Nation-Building, P D Devanandan & M M Thomas, published by the National Christian Council of India & the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, 1960.

<sup>34</sup> The Unknown Christ of Hinduism, R Panikkar, Darton, Longman & Todd, p. 131.

## **Chapter - XXIV**

### **CHRISTIAN CONTRIBUTION TO NATION BUILDING BY MOTHER TERESA**

To the temple of Kali in Calcutta come thousands of worshippers everyday bearing offerings of flowers, fruit and sweetmeats. But Kali is the goddess of destruction, her favourite food are flesh and blood. Herds of goats are kept in shed to appease her hunger and slake her thirst. In the temple courtyard there is a Y-shaped wooden post. Every few minutes a goat is led forward and its head fastened to it. A man raises a chopper in both hands and brings it down with the triumphant cry Jai Kali (Victory to Kali) severing the goat's neck with one blow. The carcass is cut up. A portion is first offered to the awesome black-faced idol with a protruding tongue and necklace of human heads. The rest is taken home as prasad (sanctified food).

Since the temple was alongside the bank (ghat) of a ranch of the Ganges (known locally as the Hooghly), the village that grew round it came to be known as Kalighata.

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*Dr Khushwant Singh*

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And when the British made it the first capital of their empire in India their mispronunciation changed Kalighata into Calcutta. The village grew into a town, the town into a metropolis in the words of Kilpling, "as the fungus sprouts chaotic from its bed... change-directed, chance-erected, laid and built on the silt; palace, byre, hovel, poverty and pride side by side". Today the city is crammed with nearly 7 million inhabitants.

Ask anyone, "Who is the best-known and best-loved citizen of Calcutta?" Nine persons out of ten will answer: "Mother Teresa."

The clue to the question how a white foreigner came to be loved by a people notorious for their xenophobia can be found beside the temple of Kali.

Kali being the patron goddess of Bengal, during her puja (prayer) festival in autumn the number of worshippers runs into millions. Rest houses for pilgrims (Dharamasalas) built in the vicinity of the temple are full. At other times they remain empty. One adjoining the temple wall consists of two spacious dormitories. In 1952, the corporation handed it over to Mother Teresa. She put her signboard; "Nirmal Hridaya (Sacred Heart) Home for Dying Destitutes".

There was an uproar. Orthodox Hindus were outraged that a Catholic institution was being established within the temple complex. The four hundred Brahmin priests attached to the temple organized demonstrations and yelled slogans demanding that the Catholics be thrown out. Mother Teresa told me the story herself: "One day I went out and spoke to them. 'If you want to kill me, kill me. But do not disturb the inmates. Let them die in peace'. That silenced them. Then one of the priests staggered in. He was an advanced case of galloping phthisis. We looked after him till he died. It changed their

attitude towards us. Today we are the best of friends. They give us all the help they can". One of Mother Teresa's admirers told me the sequel. Later one day another priest entered the Home and prostrated himself at the feet of Mothered Teresa. "For thirty years I have served Goddess Kali in her temple," he said. "Now the Goddess stands before me".

Only the stout-hearted can take the Home for Dying Destitutes in their stride. In both the dormitories extending from one end to the other are three rows of low steel-framed beds with just enough room between them for a person to stand. There is an image of the Virgin above the entrance with a dim light that burns at all hours.

All that relieves the monotony of the high walls are placards with Christian motifs and metal hooks from which ropes are stretched across the rooms, to hang bottles of saline solution with tubes stuck into the patients. The passage between the men's and the women's dormitories is used a kitchen. A small platform above the kitchen serves as the office. It has a single chair and a table with two registers to record admission and deaths. When I visited the place there were 77 men and 93 women being tended to by five nuns and brothers.

Death spread a pall of gloom in the dimly lit dormitories. Emaciated men and women sat on their beds staring vacantly at each other or lying wrapped like corpses in dark brown shrouds. Before proceeding on her rounds Mother Teresa genuflected and crossed herself in front of a diminutive figurine of the Virgin. The person in the first bed was covered from head to foot. Mother Teresa raised a corner of his blanket. It was a young man waster by consumption and was gasping for breath. She felt his fevered temples. "He won't last many hours", she remarked without any emotion as she covered his face again. The next one was a man in his



sixties. He introduced himself in English, "I an Valdin Noronha, Seaman from Goa", and exposed a misshapen foot swollen with yellow-green pus. "A truck ran over it", he explained. "They kept me in the hospital for three months and then threw me out. I have nowhere to go. No relatives, no friends, no one in the world." Mother Teresa ran her hand gently over his deformed foot and spindly leg. "Gangrene! They should have amputated it from here," she said in a matter-of-fact tone, tapping the man's knee. The next one was a boy of five with a head like an oversize football. He clutched Mother Teresa's sari and begged for bidi (Indian style cigarette) Mother Teresa patted his face and told him that he was too young to smoke. Beside him was another boy of the same age whose body had been badly burnt and he was paralyzed from his waist downwards. He was in agony and screamed each time then nun tried to give him an injection. Mother Teresa tried to reason with the boy but failed. "Let him alone," she said to the nun. "It won't help very much". And so we went from one bed to another. Mother Teresa talked to everyone who could talk, patted their forehead, ruffled their hair, examined their sores and commiserated with them. She had no tears left in her, but her compassion was boundless. The only message of cheer she had for those without hope was in Bengali:

"Bhogoban Acchen – There is God".

In Mother House, as it is popularly known, the day begins at 4:30 a.m. The nuns gather for two-hour sessions of prayers and meditation followed by Mass. Then they get to work. There is an enormous amount of washing to be done as all the clothes and linen of the Home for the Dying. The Children's Home (Sishu Bhawan), the slum school and the leprosaria are washed by the nuns. Each sister has her own bucket which, apart from her sari and books of prayers, is her only other possession. The

hand pump in the courtyard is their main source of water, the bare slabs of the cement floor their wash tub. After the washing is done, they have a quick breakfast. Just as the eastern horizon turns grey, they set out on their jeeps, by tramcar, bus or on foot with supplies of powdered milk and medicine to their schools, dispensaries, home for unwanted children, lepers and Home for the Dying. Parties also go into the city's innumerable slums and railway stations looking for abandoned children the hungry diseased, destitute and the dying. So it goes on all day till late in the evening. They have an early supper followed by more prayer and meditation. The nuns retire to their dormitories. Mother Teresa's "Bedroom" is in the passage so that the light of her table lamp does not disturb her sisters. The lights are switched off at 10:00 p.m. Only Mother Teresa works on with her accounts and answers her correspondence, which now runs into an average of 40 letters everyday.

She is small barely five feet tall and slender of build. Her deep-set eyes are a greyish-brown colour. She has high cheek bones and very thin lips. Wrinkles show her 64 years and the hard life she has led. It is a homely face without any charisma. Malcolm Muggeridge was right when he wrote that although "She is a unique person in the world today, it is not in the vulgar celebrity sense of having neon lighting about her head. Rather in the opposite sense of someone who has merged herself in the common face of mankind". The dress she has prescribed for her order is designed to hide any female charms that may attract attention. There is a kind of austere severity about the blue-bordered white sari (it costs less than a dollar) which binds her forehead up to her eyebrows and is pinned at different places to drape the rest of her body. A small iron cross dangles on her left shoulder.

"Mother, tell me about yourself, your family, why you became a nun?"

She speaks with an Indian lilt in her voice. Like convent bred Indians she often ends her sentence with an interrogatory "no?" meaning, "Isn't that so?" Her answers are brief and do not add much more to what I have read about her. She was born on 27 August 1910, in Skipje, Yugoslavia – one of three children of an Albanian storekeeper and his peasant wife. They were a happy family. Her interest in missionary activity began at 12 when she heard of the work being done by Jesuits in Kureseong near Darjeeling. When I asked her if twelve wasn't too young to decide on a life's career, she replied: "We are never too young to love, I was just like a girl getting ready to get married, no?" By the time she was eighteen any doubts she might have had were resolved and she became a nun. She joined the Loreto nuns in Dublin and after a year's training and learning English came to Calcutta in 1929 as a geography teaching in St. Mary's High School. She was for many years principal of the school. She found the cloistered comfort of the convent against the spirit of her calling.

On 10<sup>th</sup> September 1946 which she described as "Inspiration day" and "the day of decision", she received "a special call from Jesus Christ". She recounted how it happened. "I was going to Darjeeling to make my retreat. It was in that train, I heard the call to give up all and follow him to the slums to serve him among the poorest of the poor." No city in the world can vie with Calcutta for that commodity. She sought permission to work in the slums. The Pope gave her his blessings. She spent three months of the summer with the American Medical Missionary Sisters in Patna receiving intensive training in nursing and later that year (1948) opened her first slum

school in a private house given to her. A few months later her erstwhile student, Subhasini Das, joined her as sister Agnes. A new order, the Missionaries of Charity, was instituted in Calcutta. The male branch, Missionary Brothers of Charity, was set up many years later in March 1963.

Mother Teresa justified the four vows taken by her order in the following words: "Poverty is to be very strictly observed because to be able to love the poor and to know the poor we must be poor ourselves, no? We take the vow of chastity so that we can give our hearts complete and undivided to Christ. Obedience, because we take all other vows according to obedience. We have to do God's will in everything, no? We also take a special vow which other congregations don't take, that of giving whole hearted free service to the poor. This vow means that we cannot work for the rich, neither can we accept any money for the work we do. Ours has to be a free service, and to the poor".

"Mother Teresa, whence this special interest in the dying?"

I asked her.

"It is a vocation, a call. Nobody wants the dying, the diseased the sick, the crippled, no? I wanted those whom no one wanted, no one loved or cared."

"How did it start? I mean this particular interest in death?"

"I don't remember the exact date. But when I left Loreto in 1948, I saw a woman lying in front of a hospital, half eaten up by rats and maggots. I looked after her till she died. Then the Police Commissioner gave me this place next to the Kali Temple".

Foreign missionaries have earned a bad name among the Hindus for their proselytization. I asked Mother Teresa why she had never bothered to convert anyone to Catholicism. She replied, "Conversion is not my work nor yours. Our work is to bring people to God."

"God seems to matter less these days, "I said to provoke her. "There are many Godless countries and the younger generation doesn't find God necessary. Attendance in churches is falling day by day."

Mother Teresa knit her eyebrows and her voice became agitated. "That's not true! I do not believe there is anyone who does not believe in God – not unless he is not human or is mentally ill. It has become a fashion to speak in this way. I have seen young people, even hippies, who pretended to have no faith, work ceaselessly all day and all night to help people. That shows they are in contact with God."

"Why did you choose India? And of all places in India, why this hell-hole, Calcutta?"

She let a gentle smile come over her face. "India was a missionary country. I was sent here. And I love the people of Calcutta. They have a warmth which you don't see anywhere else." She told me of an experience which make the people of Calcutta so lovable. "During the floods last year I was bringing victims to places of shelter. A lady who had never known me brought me hot food in her car. Where else in the world do you come across people like that?" It is obvious that Mother Teresa would have gone to any country to which she was sent with the same unquestioning obedience and worked up the same enthusiasm for the people amongst whom she had to live. Since she was sent to India, she assiduously Indianized herself. Here was the first Catholic Order to



adopt the Indian sari, the Indian style of squatting cross-legged on the floor in the chapel, eating India food in the Indian manner. She taught herself Bengali, which she now speaks fluently and when India became free she took Indian nationality. Mother Teresa's strength to do what she does come from simple convictions. ("She is blessed with certainties", wrote Muggeridge). When I asked her. "Who has been the dominant influence in your life? Gandhi, Nehru, Schweitzer?" Without even a pause to Ponder over my question, she replied "JESUS CHRIST".

"What about books? Have you read anything that you consider having influenced your thinking?"

"The Scripture."

I changed the subject and asked her how she got the money to run her world-wide organization. She replied: "It comes, money is no great problem. God gives through his people. We have never been short of money. It is more important to get people involved, to make them realize that the sick, Old and hungry are their brothers, no? When you write about me, I hope you will capitalize that". When she started her first school in the slums, all she had was Rs. 5 (75 cents). But as people came to know what she was doing, they brought things and money. "It was all Divine Providence", she said and narrated some miracles. Once in winter time they ran out of quilts. The nuns found sheets but there was no cotton to stuff in them. Mother Teresa got her pillow and just as she was about to rip it open, the bell rang. Somebody who was leaving Calcutta for a posting abroad had come to leave his quilts and mattresses with Mother Teresa.

On another occasion when they had run out of rice, a lady who had never been to them before brought a

bag or rice. Out of curiosity they measured the amount with the tin cup they used for measuring their daily rations. It happened to be exactly the quantity they required. "When I told the lady that, she broke down and cried... to realize that God had used her as an instrument of His will was too much for her".

That afternoon I was with Mother Teresa on a "begging mission." We went to call on the manager of a big biscuit factory. They always give us broken biscuits they cannot sell, as a Christmas gift. The sick like broken biscuits", she informed me. Mr. Jyoti Mukherjee, the young manager of the firm came out to receive her and escorted us to his teak wood-paneled, air-conditioned office. Mother Teresa began by thanking him for what he had done in the past and continued, "You must have lots of problems. Everything is in short supply: flour, butter, sugar, no?" It was evident that Mr. Mukherjee's speech had been taken out of his mouth. "Yes," he agreed, "we are not producing anything like we did last year".

Mother Teresa went on: "It must be more difficult for well-to-do people or the middle class. We poor people can beg, they are too ashamed to beg, no?" I could see Mr. Mukherjee's defences crumble. He looked unhappy with himself. "Why are all these shortages? Please tell me. I do not understand politics". Jyoti Mukerjee became expansive and told her of union troubles, strikes and lockouts. "Thank God!" exclaimed Mother Teresa. "We only work for God; there are no unions" She proceeded to elucidate on the hard times. "The other day we picked up a hungry beggar. He had not eaten for weeks. When we brought him a plate of rice he said, "I haven't seen rice for many weeks; let me loot at it!" Mr. Mukherjee picked up his phone and rang up the storekeeper for

forty large tins of broken biscuits to be delivered to Mother Teresa.

Money is no problem because Mother Teresa has successfully roused the conscience of the well-to-do towards their poorer neighbours. All doors of the government are open to her. One of her most ardent admirers was the late Dr. B.C. Roy, one-time Chief Minister of Bengal. She could barge into his office any time, any day, without an appointment. "People steal my money", he said to her. "You take what you want, run those houses as you think best, I shall not ask for any account from you. I trust you". On his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, Dr Roy paid Mother Teresa a handsome tribute. Asked by a journalist how he felt on that day, the Chief Minister replied, "As I climbed the steps of Writer's Building to my office, I was thinking of Mother Teresa who devotes her life to the service of the poor."

The Commissioner of Police and the Corporation of Calcutta rely on her to relieve them of some of their burdens. She has been given a pass by the railways to travel wherever she likes. Organizations have been set up to sponsor children's education, collect clothes and food. To be a member of Mother Teresa's organization is the "in thing" amongst the elite of Calcutta.

It is not only the rich who given to Mother Teresa. Children in far off Denmark, Germany, England and the United States save their pocket money or forego their glass of milk to be able to send something to her children. She told me of an incident that happened to her not very long ago. She boarded a crowded tramcar. A poor man who stood up to give her his seat asked her if she would let him pay for her ticket. "This is all I can afford," he said as he took out a ten-paisa coin (one cent) from the folds of his dhoti.

"Mother Teresa, there are too many poor and destitute in the world today. How much can you do for them." I asked her.

"It may be only a drop in the ocean, but if that drop was not in the ocean, will the ocean less because of that missing drop?"

The people of Calcutta cherish her more than any other Indian living today. They have heaped encomiums on her. She is known as "The lady of the slums, the champion of the poor... the apostle of the unwanted... the angel of mercy... saint of the gutters... the gentle mother."











# **Christian Contribution To Nation Building**

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